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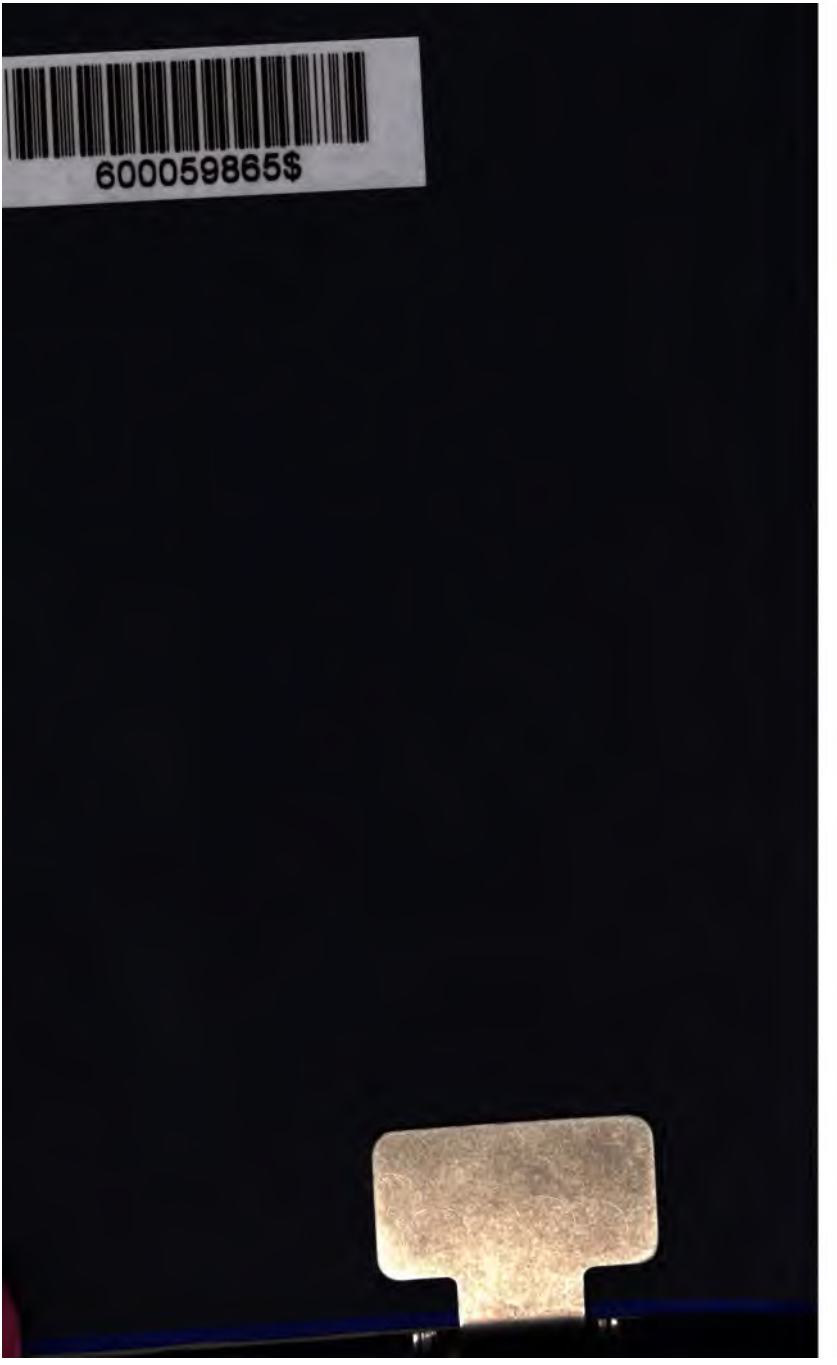
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THE O'NEILES;

OR,

SECOND SIGHT.

BY

ALISON GARD.

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THE O'NEILES.

CHAPTER I.

"Weep on, weep on. your hour is past;
Your dreams of pride are o'er;
The fatal chain is round you cast,
And you are men no more.

Weep on—perhaps in after days,
They'll learn to love your name;
When many a deed may wake in praise
That long hath slept in blame.

And when they tread the ruin'd isle,
Where rest, at length, the lord and slave,
They'll wondering ask, how hands so vile
Could conquer hearts so brave?"

MOORE.

IN the early part of the present century, in the west of Ireland (not far from the mouth of the Shannon, which, after traversing one province, divides another on its way to the Atlantic, into which it precipitates itself), lived the last branch of an ancient Irish family of the name of O'Neile.

Upon the broad lands which formerly extended for many miles, but which at the time we write were reduced to as many acres, stood O'Neile Court, partly in ruins, and with little to admire in its structure beyond the time-stained grey walls, revealing in their decaying outlines a style of architecture, common enough in the remote century to which it had belonged, but rare at the time of which we are writing. It was one of the

few old castles that for many generations had belonged to the same family—a very rare event, as nearly all the landed estates in Ireland had been bestowed by Henry VIII. and Elizabeth upon their several favourites, with the exception of a few in the western part of that country.

This wildly-grand sea-bound coast is fringed with dark lofty cliffs soaring to the clouds, upon whose summits many wild birds have perched their eyries in proud defiance of man's inability to molest them, and where their free cry mingles itself with the ocean's roar that alone can subdue it. Far and wide in the background are scattered innumerable bogs, favouring the growth of various beautiful and extraordinary plants, which, being watered by the rains of a hundred and sixty days in the year, help to give them that rare verdancy so peculiar to the vegetation of the Emerald Isle, and which is seldom to be met with but in the precious stone itself.

But here, at least for the present, we cease our observations of nature and locality, and enter at once upon the history before us.

The head of the family, "The O'Neile," as he was designated, was a fine old man, with a smooth florid complexion, while his long silver hair flowing back from his forehead tended to enhance the patriarchal air of dignity and benevolence which characterised his general appearance. He was a widower, having lost his wife nearly eight years before the commencement of this tale.

Her death was sudden and unexpected. Report said that she had been passionately beloved by him; but for some reason, which he would not even hint at, he never spoke of her, nor allowed her children to do so.

His family consisted of four children, but his eldest-born, Pierce O'Neile, who had once been the pride and idol of his heart, was now an outcast and a wanderer far from the land of his birth.

It was supposed by the many, not acquainted with the exact particulars of his disgrace, that in a moment of temptation and evil counsel, he was led to perpetrate

an act, that under other circumstances he would have been ashamed to commit; and, bearing with him the upbraidings and reproaches of his family, he was obliged to fly the country till time and absence might soften their ill-feeling against him, and in consideration of his youth and inexperience be induced to judge him more leniently.

His father cut him off from the inheritance, such as it was, and settled it upon his younger brother Otway, who was a dark, manly boy of eight years of age, and now the only hope of the fallen family; for through him they looked forward to the regenerating of the once proud name, and a renewal of their former grandeur. He was also the adopted heir of an eccentric old bachelor distantly connected with the O'Neiles, who was anxious to leave a representative of his own name. In the event of the boy's death the inheritance was to descend to a cousin, an Englishman, named Lionel Herbert, whom the O'Neile had often seen when he, Lionel, was a child, in London, being himself at that time but just married, and on his wedding tour.

Mary, the eldest daughter of the O'Neile, and her father's favourite, a delicate girl of about twenty-one years of age, was the peace-maker in the family, and one who would not have injured or harboured an ill-feeling or prejudice against the most suspicious or guilty character. Hers was a gentle, equal nature, lovely in its devotion, generous and self-sacrificing. There was no guilt—no thought of wrong in her heart, for she believed all to be like herself, and so lived on from day to day contented in her calm innocent views of things and mankind in general. She had a truly religious mind, that drew its inspiration more from the glories of God's works, than from merely following conventional forms of worship. She was steadfast and happy in her creed, and in this spirit strictly attended to her duties.

The youngest daughter, Geraldine, a singularly beau-

tiful girl, scarcely seventeen, was tall and graceful, possessing those undulating movements which bore a strange affinity to those of a serpent, for she would glide round and be near you, when you least expected her presence.

She had those classical features seen in the type of the Irish aristocracy—her large dark blue eyes glanced from beneath a fringe of long silken lashes, arched from above by pencilled brows, some shades darker than the pale auburn hair, worn floating carelessly around the swan-like throat. The extreme delicacy of her complexion was somewhat heightened and rendered more piquant, by the few freckles that were discernible upon the oval face. She was indeed a picture of youthful loveliness and freshness, attracting all who gazed upon her for the first time with ineffable fascination. However, a disciple of Lavater, if asked his opinion, after strictly scrutinising her countenance, while admitting it to possess a great degree of beauty, would undoubtedly have observed a disagreeable peculiarity in the shape and size of those lovely eyes, so strikingly similar to those of more than one remarkable and world-wide renowned woman of past days.

Geraldine, though an angel in appearance, was not deficient of the caprices and failings to which flesh is heir—nay more, she had a passion for tormenting and torturing animals and insects of all kinds whose helplessness rendered them innocuous and incapable of resisting her cruel vagaries; yet she was desirous that her actions and general bearing in the sight of others should harmonise with her beauty. But there were times when all her assumptions of gentleness and humility were laid aside, and that was when there was no one near but the timid Mary, whom she would torment and accuse of hypocrisy. Even her little brother Otway, —whom she really loved, more perhaps because she beheld in him the last of the O'Neiles, and the one whose future greatness was to spread its refulgence over her-

self,—she often found means to teaze and irritate. The boy, however, liked Geraldine better than his eldest sister, and it was her good-will and approval that he invariably sought.

Now there was one, her cousin Catherine, to whom Geraldine never showed her true character, between herself and whom existed an unaccountable antipathy, which did not manifest itself in any outward demonstration of either word or manner, for they were (particularly Geraldine) exactingly polite and condescending in the different relations and routine of every-day life. They were seldom or ever seen together,—an unusual thing with young girls of a similar age and belonging to the same household,—so totally opposed were their tastes, pursuits and ideas; yet this cousin was the only one with whom Geraldine never quarrelled, or to whom she never rendered herself obnoxious, at least in her presence.

This Catherine was the only child of O'Neile's youngest brother, who died many years before, leaving his little girl to the care of her uncle in the event of her mother's death, which followed shortly after that of her father.

The O'Neile took her to his home and heart, for he learned to love Catherine as if she had been his own daughter. She was two years older than Geraldine, and in appearance had little to recommend her beyond her large brilliant dark eyes, and soft magnificent black hair. She was of a pale sallow complexion, and her features in general were ordinary, except when she smiled, and that was but rarely, yet when she did, it changed the whole expression of the countenance, lighting it up, and giving it a warmth and radiance that was almost magical in its effect. Her natural disposition was energetic and active, but there were times when she was subject to most unaccountable fits of depression; and then she would fly from every one, and remain hours alone in a listless attitude, as if holding

communication with wandering and invisible spirits, from which ordinary or chance interruptions could with difficulty arouse her.

We shall only further remark, for the elucidation of some circumstances in the story, that she was born as the neighbouring clocks of the town were striking midnight, and upon the eve of Saint Agnes, when the belief that exists in Ireland is, that all good and bad spirits are then about, and preside at the birth of mortals born on that night.

The foster-mother of Catherine, who was present at her birth, with the superstition which is inherent in the Irish character, declared, as she took the child for the first time in her arms, that, contrary to all precedent and laws of nature, it opened wide its great dark eyes, and looked at her for a moment as if in recognition, afterwards resuming the usual vacant look peculiar to new-born infants. This circumstance led the foster-mother to infer that the child was already endowed with supernatural power, and that its destiny was already fixed.

However, up to the moment our story commences, nothing worthy of note had taken place to verify the nurse's belief of that night.

Catherine's mind was deeply tinctured with wild romance and legendary lore, which did not fail to act upon her enthusiastic nature. She fancied that some mysterious circumstance was attached to every spot of earth, stone, and ruin, and a foreshadowing of something in them, which had taken deeper root from the wildly grand and picturesque scenery associated with her earliest recollections; everything around her was greatly heightened, and rendered doubly attractive, by the strange and touching imagery with which her nurse used to beguile the hours of childish fancy during the long winter evenings, thereby exciting her love of the marvellous and the supernatural. She had an ardent, fervent love and admiration for her native place, and

for the people amongst whom she was born; with their history, misfortunes and wrongs she had long been made acquainted, and had imbibed a natural aversion to the Saxon race, whom she. looked upon as the original enemies and usurpers of her unhappy country, that no reasoning or conviction could wholly erase.

Her fertile mind, and the influence she had acquired over the hearts and thoughts of the peasantry, stood her in great need, so far as enabling her to take the almost entire management of the remnant of land which now belonged to the O'Neile. Her courage, added to her quickness of comprehension, relieved him of many a heartache and tedious hour. She would think nothing of riding all day, and often far into the night, collecting the rents and arrears due upon the estate. Many an encouraging word and pleasant smile she carried with her on her way, and many a welcome and blessing was showered upon her, as she passed along the road, and through the otherwise silent forest. When in her solitude, and the dark shades of night gathered around her before she could reach her destination, her heart never throbbed with fear, for she was conscious of the affection and esteem in which she was held by all; she knew that if she were to be molested, or an attempt made to rob her, all the peasantry, far and near, would rush to her protection, and that summary revenge would fall upon the offender.

Before proceeding any further, it may be satisfactory to give a short description of O'Neile Court. It was a long irregular stone building, with a high projecting tower in the centre; there were innumerable gothic windows, with only the frame-work remaining, the panes having long since been shattered by the wind, or appropriated to other purposes; a portico, raised upon pillars, whose base and cornices were partly destroyed, supported a semi-circular balcony midway, shut in by heavy stone work, from which protruded the dilapidated remains of what at one time must have

represented some fabulous erections of animals and demons carved in rough stone. One wing of the castle was larger and more irregular than the other, and seemed to have been added to it at some earlier period. Long oriel windows, now partly nailed up, defaced or broken, were almost hidden by the luxuriant ivy that had entwined itself around their frame-work, and hung from them in wild fantastic beauty, sheltering in its time-hallowed foliage many a wandering bird from the inclemency of the weather. The rooms on the ground-floor of this wing, consisted of a dining-room and library, both in a somewhat dilapidated and neglected condition, but still showing remains of former splendour; heavy gilt cornices, and window-frames, and mirrored panels, now broken and blackened, that at one time might have reflected youth and beauty. The furniture was time-worn and scanty, consisting of massive ebony, high-backed chairs and tables. The tapestry that hung from the windows, was in many places mildewed and torn. The hall, dividing this from the other wing of the castle, was oblong, at the end of which, upon one side, was a broad flight of stairs, leading to the upper apartments, that creaked and moaned with an ominous sound, at the pressure of each footfall; on the other side of this staircase was a door leading to the servants'-hall and back part of the building. Opposite the dining-room, already described, was the family sitting-room, a large square room, the ceiling supported with enormous beams of oak, and in which were four long narrow windows in deep recesses, showing the thickness of the masonry. The walls of this apartment were covered with family portraits, most of them full-lengthed and encased in heavy frames; the furniture, like that of the dining-room, was time-worn and dingy. In one corner stood an old spinnet, more in use as a piece of furniture than originally intended; while various-sized old-fashioned settees, covered with

faded damask, contributed to give to this room some air of comfort, entirely deficient in the others. There were a few ancient cabinets, containing beautiful specimens of old china. The only article of ornament was an old Irish harp; a stand of music was beside it, placed in one of the window recesses.

The O'Neile had partly undertaken the education of his daughters and niece, that is, when his indolence did not interfere to prevent his doing so; this, however, occurring but too frequently, he partly resigned that office to the family priest, who instructed his young pupils with the patience and perseverance to which the O'Neile was a stranger. All the light and elegant accomplishments followed by women, were obliged to be neglected, the O'Neile's remnant of an income not allowing him to provide a governess for his daughters. One accomplishment, however, was still exercised in the family, in which Geraldine, young as she was, excelled,—her performance on the harp, which in better days had been her mother's; in fact, the instrument was an heir-loom that had been re-strung times out of mind. Upon this instrument they received instruction from an old harper, who, when on his rounds about the country, always came to give a lesson at the Court. Poor as the old man was, and obliged to wander from place to place for a subsistence, yet he could not be induced to accept anything further, in repayment for his time and tuition, than the shelter and board offered him at the O'Neile's hospitable table. Indeed he felt honoured at the privilege that was allotted to him, being welcomed as a guest, and teaching his art to an O'Neile.

Their poverty did not in any way take from their pride of birth and ancient descent; it is not improbable that on this account they were, if possible, more respected and honoured by the peasantry, who would have died and given the last of whatever they possessed in the world, to contribute to the comfort and support

of the family. The name of O'Neile was echoed far and near with respect and love.

There is in the nature and the heart of the true-born Irish peasant a feeling of devotion, amounting to adoration, to the lord of the soil, whose ancestors have dwelled upon it centuries before, that no poverty, however abject, can change, or circumstances alter; and to no stranger, let him be ever so just and good a landlord, will they bow or give submission; he is looked upon as a traitor upon the land of the once rightful possessor, for whom they would beg, borrow, or steal, when perhaps their energies would fail them in either helping themselves or family. With all their national peculiarities, they possess great virtues of fidelity and self-sacrifice to those whom their forefathers have served and lived under, of which few other vassals in any other country can boast.

CHAPTER II.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

BYRON.

ONE evening, towards the end of August, the setting sun was throwing its bright beams upon sky and earth, and lighting up, with its glowing magnificence, all things upon which it fell, not omitting two youthful figures, worthy indeed, as regards beauty and grace, to be encircled by its varying and brilliant tints.

The young man seemed to be in the first bloom of youth, though in reality he was some years older than his youthful appearance might have led one to imagine, no doubt owing to his very fair complexion and smooth

face, which gave no indication of manhood beyond a slight moustache somewhat darker than the bright wavy hair upon which the sun was now playing, for he had removed his hat, and kept twirling it round in his hand in a careless light manner, as a sort of an accompaniment to the conversation now taking place between him and his companion. Though he was tall and slight, his steady firm pace and erect bearing gave evidence of no deficiency of bodily strength. This was Lionel Herbert, the English cousin, who had come over on a visit to an old college friend in Limerick, and who, before leaving Ireland, took the opportunity of visiting his relations the O'Neiles, with the intention of only remaining a day or two.

The truth was, that even at that distance, the report of his fair cousin's beauty had reached him, so that he could not rest till he had satisfied his curiosity. He expected to find a half civilised, wild Irish girl, whose beauty, no doubt, had been somewhat exaggerated; but he was in no wise prepared for the graceful, elegant apparition of loveliness that met his wondering gaze, and made no slight impression upon his youthful fancy.

It was only the fifth day of his visit, yet he felt as if he had known Geraldine for as many months, as the following *tête-à-tête* will show.

"No, Geraldine, much as I should wish to extend my visit amid this wild and picturesque scenery, and I may add"—his voice assuming a more tender tone—"in your society, affairs which cannot be postponed, require my presence in England for a few days, the beginning of next month; still I hope, at some future period, to be allowed to visit again the scenes which, I may say, in a few short hours have become so familiar and—" He hesitated, as if afraid of saying too much, when Geraldine broke the pause that ensued.

"Ah, flatterer! I am sure you only say all this to please me, believing me to be like most of my countrywomen, very patriotic. But you mistake, for my feel-

ings and opinions are but anti-Irish. I have seen so much poverty"—she sighed as she continued—"misused, and I may say mistaken patriotism, in the country, that whatever earlier enthusiasm or love of it might have been infused into my being, and fostered by those around me, it has now become very much weakened by my own judgment of things, and"—she continued, speaking with more effusion and gaiety—"your eloquent delineations and pictures of life in England,—England! which to me is but a name, as any other might be; yet, what aspirations! what longings it awakens in me! How different everything must be there from what it is in this unhappy country! What a debt do not Englishmen owe their ancestors, who have bequeathed to them freedom,—freedom, yet with law, toleration, yet not without fixed principles, and the impetus to improvement that is given to all classes, but which we have lost for ever. England! how my heart beats at the word; and the dream of my dearest, wildest hopes, is to live and die within its peaceful, happy realms."

She ceased speaking, and timidly bent her graceful head, as if overpowered by the feelings that she had in part expressed. Lionel, although unprepared for such a demonstration, could not but feel flattered by her eulogium upon his country. He was a Briton in heart, opinions, and tastes, and as he now looked upon the slight young girl at his side, and thought how her youth and delicate loveliness were lost and hidden in this wild part of the world, and of how she would shine, even amid the beauty and luxury of London patrician society, his compassion and interest were awakened in her behalf,—two dangerous feelings to find place in a man's heart, and most of all in that of a young and imaginative one.

His voice had become softer, and his gaze lingered upon the fair face before him, as he impulsively said—

"Who knows, Geraldine, but that your future home and happiness may be found in that land where your

desires would place them. I cannot think—oh, Geraldine! if I dared hope, if—" What he would have said was half muttered to himself; yet language was unnecessary to inform Geraldine what his unfinished phrase implied, for a blush overspread her face, and her bright eyes glistened with hope and pleasure, while the thin delicate fingers played nervously with one of the long amber curls that floated upon her shoulder. He began again to address her.

"But, Geraldine, I possess nothing, and have nothing to offer but a name, which it must be my task to make known to fame. A briefless barrister has not many claims upon society, or upon what it can give him."

"Lionel, you have youth and talents that will, that must prevail through all difficulties. I see before you a brilliant destiny, a destiny worthy of the name you bear."

"What's in a name, cousin? It is the mind, and the useful faculties which emanate from it, that ennoble. Talent can at any time confer a name, but a name cannot call forth talent. You know, too, that I have Irish blood in my veins, for my grandmother was an O'Neile, and from her, they say, I inherit whatever oratorical and argumentative qualities I may lay claim to; both of which, I am told, the veriest bog-trotter in Ireland is not deficient in. Is it not the case?"

"Quite true: Paddy, you know, will always have the last word in an argument, and should you complain or reproach him with it, he would tell you 'that there can be no conviction without an argument.'"

"And he is not far wrong there, Geraldine. As a child, they say, I would never answer, or enter upon any subject without its entailing an argument, which I used to *pro* and *con* to my own satisfaction, till at last my father took it into his head to make a lawyer of me. So, fair cousin, in me you behold a victim to circumstances, and to prosy old law; the latter, in my estimation, is sufficient to take all the romance out of human

nature. My mother would have preferred my entering the army, a vocation in which one has no exertion to make, but only to take things quietly till one is sent upon foreign service, where he either gets a bullet through his head, or, should fortune favour him, promotion, and an honourable mention in the 'Gazette,' and afterwards returns a hero to rest upon his laurels. Whereas in the law, a man must devote all his talents, should he ever hope to approach the woolsack."

He had scarcely ceased speaking, when the sound of horse's hoofs was heard approaching rapidly from behind them. They both involuntarily stepped aside, to give place to the rider, whoever he might be. Lionel, upon his part, uttered an exclamation of surprise, as his eyes fell upon the unexpected and strange personage who now hastily pulled up beside them, while Geraldine calmly remarked—

"Why, it's only Catherine, who has been away for the last few days upon a collecting expedition for papa. You must know that she is his land-agent, and kepeer of the privy purse."

An introduction then took place. The horse, meanwhile, becoming restive at the sudden curb put upon his movements, began pawing the ground in a graceful, impatient manner. Catherine, with her long flowing habit, and a short scarlet mantle upon her shoulders, part of the hood of which, placed carelessly upon her head, admitted to view the clear brown face, with its glittering eyes and the splendid hair, now falling negligently about it, no doubt owing to the rapid pace at which she had ridden, looked somewhat strange in the appearance she presented, which was heightened by the circumstances of situation and apparel. As Catherine's eye for the first time rested upon Lionel Herbert, when the introduction took place, a deadly pallor overspread her countenance, and the smile which a moment before had lightened it up, imparting to it a wonderful witchery, now gave place to a look of pain, not to say of horror,

while her hand tightened with desperate energy upon the reins, as if she were trying to conquer her emotion; then, uttering something in apology about her uncle's impatiently expecting her return, she gave the animal rein; he set off with a bound, and both horse and rider were soon lost to sight. Geraldine gave vent to a merry burst of laughter when she observed her cousin's look of unfeigned astonishment at the encounter that had just taken place; then, controlling her merriment, she said—

"I hope now, Lionel, that you will no longer cast a doubt upon our national superstitions, for I see by your face, that you imagine Catherine to be one of the weird sisters on her ghostly rounds. Yet I can assure you, for your peace of mind, that she is real flesh and blood, as you shall have this evening at dinner the opportunity of putting to the test. You must not think from her silent demeanour of to-day, that she is invariably so quiet; she can be animated enough when it pleases her to be so, only at times she is a little whimsical, and I conclude that this is one of her black days. I can tell you she indulges in them, and pretty freely too. At such a time she generally contrives to render herself invisible.

Lionel remained silent a little time.

"So that young lady is your cousin, Miss Catherine O'Neile, of whom I have heard my uncle speak with such enthusiasm?" A pause ensued, and Lionel continued. "She really looks the personification of the wild Irish girl. I don't mean in the common acceptation of the word, but such as would be the poet's idea of one."

Another pause.

"How fearlessly and well she sat her horse! Her attitude and bearing were strangely at odds with the expression of, I might say, fear and doubt which suddenly came into her face: yet I imagine that fear was not a natural feature in her character; for the lines

about her mouth, and the shape of her brow, would be a distinct contradiction to such an assertion."

"Why I declare, Mr. Herbert" (the cousinship was for the moment forgotten or ignored, for reasons best known to the fair speaker), "how accurately you must have looked at her, to have observed in those very few moments all that you now mention."

After a moment Geraldine changed her tone of voice, which had the slightest touch of irony in it, to that of a playful one.

"I am really half inclined to be jealous, if I did not know that Catherine's very being is antipathetic to everything English. She is an inveterate patriot. I am certain that she would give her life, if required, in the cause of this unhappy land of ours."

"Really! Why, Geraldine, your remarks interest and excite my curiosity extremely. So your cousin, Miss Catherine, it appears has an antipathy to my country and people? Perhaps my unexpected appearance here, may have called for the look of surprised alarm written on her face. How disagreeable to be under the same roof with a young lady possessing such strong prejudices."

"As to that, Catherine, with all her faults, respects and holds as sacred as does the Arab the laws of hospitality; she would defend her greatest enemy after she had courteously broken bread with him. So pray don't look upon her prejudices in such a disagreeable light. It would be so unpleasant for papa were he to be informed upon the subject."

"Well, Geraldine, I shall leave you to be the angel of peace between us. Please exert your celestial attributes in my behalf, for I am very timid (though you might not think so) with a strong-minded young lady, such as I imagine your cousin to be, who can have little sympathy for her fellow-mortals or their failings."

Geraldine laughed at the remark, as she slily looked up at him from under her long eyelashes.

CHAPTER III.

"The stranger at my fireside cannot see
The forms I see, nor hear the sounds I hear:
He but perceives what is; while unto me
All that has been is visible and clear."

"—— And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me,
That my soul cannot resist:
A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only,
As the mist resembles the rain."

LONGFELLOW.

THE same day at dinner, Lionel had a more ample opportunity of observing Catherine, as she sat opposite to him, conversing freely and unrestrainedly with Father Maguire, the family confessor, a tall, broad-shouldered, intelligent-looking man, whose mind was far above the average of Irish priests, he having received a brilliant education, and travelled over most of the Continent of Europe—(rather an expensive and serious undertaking in those days, when railways and steam navigation were not even thought of). No one, to have witnessed his conviviality, and listened to his humour as he now sat over his glass of punch after dinner, would have imagined him to be a votary to Romanism—in short, his divinity was completely overshadowed by its oft-times more tempting rival, materiality. Father Maguire had the good taste, or perhaps as many would call it, the weakness, not to force upon others his opinons with regard to religious subjects when dining out. Before the French Revolution broke out, he was in Paris as a young priest for the purpose of attending all the erudite lectures of the Sorbonne, and was admitted into the coteries of genius and wit, so much in vogue at that period. His letters of introduction from some of the first families in Ireland, together with

his handsome presence, and flow of small talk, in which he excelled, soon made him a welcome guest wherever he went. Talleyrand, at that period himself an Abbé, took him by the hand and introduced him to his friends. This gave great prestige to the young priest.

Some years later, when he returned to Ireland, he became chaplain to the O'Neile's father, when he gained that ascendency in the family which he knew so well how to maintain. It was he who undertook to instruct the O'Neile's children, and to correct the deficiencies of their education.

Geraldine, though by no means wanting in intellect, soon renounced all studies and philosophy, on which the priest had tried to fix her attention, in favour of the elegant superfluities of that day, such as revelling in French poetry, and often herself attempting epigrams which were generally failures; and with the musical aptitude peculiar to the Irish of all classes, she improvised many a wild sweet melody, which her harp echoed.

Mary had no particular talent, nor did she feel in want of such, for she possessed a golden heart, that in its goodness and brightness saw everything through the radiance of its own purity.

Catherine devoted all her spare moments to study, for which she showed a great aptitude; she was proficient in both the Latin and Irish languages,—in the latter she invariably addressed the peasantry. She had read and translated many of the old chronicles and ballads of a past age, which Father Maguire had procured for her. She was his favourite pupil, and of all the O'Neile family the one who interested him the most. He had been the family confessor for many years, and it was whispered by some, that he had a powerful influence over the O'Neile, whose opinions were entirely under the priest's subjection. Indeed, many thought there was a slight shade of fear in the deference he seemed to show him, if an O'Neile could ever have been said to have experienced such a feeling; but, poor old man! he

was very much changed from what he had been in former years; poverty and misfortune had done their work with him, and perhaps were he to look too deeply into his own conscience, he might there hear a small accusing voice relating to past times. Yet be it as it might, no one could now look at him in his reverse of fortune, and think of the race he had descended from, and the grand old name he bore, without having the strongest sympathy excited in his behalf.

Poverty is at all times sad and hard to bear, and upon none does it fall with a heavier hand than upon the proud man, for, under its stinging pressure, he too often sits down helpless and crushed—unless, indeed, he be possessed of a powerful will, and a disdain of all human chances and changes.

But to return to Father Maguire. He could talk well and brilliantly upon most subjects, and Lionel Herbert was not a little surprised at the flashes of wit exchanged between him and Catherine. Geraldine's vanity was somewhat wounded, as she watched the distraction of her English cousin, whose attention she could not permanently fix, despite of all her efforts to do so.

Geraldine, as far as outward form went, was lovely, and she knew it too well, but it was the loveliness of a beautiful statue, that pleases so long as the eye rests upon it.

Lionel, as he now gazed upon Catherine's animated expressive countenance, and listened to her ready wit, beheld her in quite another light to what he had done only a few hours before. It might have been a concerted plan between the priest and herself, to show the proud Englishman (as they believed him) that they were not such Goths and Vandals in Ireland as he, in his ignorance of Irish life and habits, might have imagined them to be, or it might have been merely accident. Yet those who best understood Father Maguire's character, could, had they observed him closely that evening, have

remarked a malicious twinkle in the corner of his bright piercing eyes, as he every now and then, in the most innocent manner, looked across the table, while he said—

"Well, I must say, that I feel an immense sympathy for the man who can sit down comfortably at his own fireside, or that of his neighbour, and enjoy his glass of punch." Then, turning to Lionel—"I believe, sir, over on the other side of our little green Isle, they don't patronise our 'mountain dew,' as the Irishman poetically designates it? and more the pity, for that same! You have no idea what a salubrious effect it has upon the mind of us poor sinners—softening it, and giving it a fellow-feeling for all those who are oppressed and unfortunate. Heigho!"

Before Lionel could reply to this sally, which was spoken good-naturedly, Catherine commenced speaking, as if the priest had purposely addressed himself to her.

"If I were not a woman, I should answer you, Father Maguire, and that, too, on behalf of Mr. Herbert." She slightly bowed to him. "However, as it is, I can only recall to your remembrance the Latin quotation, which, when interpreted in our vernacular, runs—'There is truth in wine.'"

She had scarcely finished the sentence, when she observed the uneasy glance with which her uncle was regarding both herself and the priest; then, with a rapid change of feature and voice, she added, turning to Father Maguire—

"Do you remember what a diligent pupil you had in me, when I used to give myself up to Latin and Irish, all the day long?" She sighed, as she said, "Those were happy days."

"Why, Catherine, to hear you speak thus," said her uncle, "one would think that there had been only a certain number of happy days in one's life, and that those were peculiar to childhood alone. That's nonsense, my girl."

"Yet, so I believe, uncle."

"A child's and a grown person's idea of happiness are very different," said the priest. "Were we to possess what children designate and understand by the name of happiness, to us it would not be such. Call it rather inexperience of all that surround them, for they don't seek to penetrate further than the surface, which in their happy eyes has all the sunlight upon it without its shadows, for an all-wise Providence has willed it thus. Childhood comes to a man only once in his life, and in that brief space, is bestowed upon him the gift of beholding his own innocent, careless, happy self in all beautiful things that surround him; while we of a larger growth, who have learned life's lesson, be it in sorrow or in joy, are not contented with such, for we plunge beneath the surface, and allow the sunshine to close over us.

"Still, Miss Catherine, I should be sorry that this definition should apply to you, or any like you." There was a strong pathos in his voice as he said this to her. "Our happiness, such as it is, mostly lies in our own hands; but, unfortunately, too often we let it slip away from them."

The general conversation was now broken upon by the O'Neile's asking Geraldine to give them some music. She stood up to comply with a glad smile, for it would give her the opportunity of attracting Lionel's attention to herself; she was annoyed that up to the present time Catherine had taken the lead in the conversation. She knew that Lionel was passionately fond of the harp, and she played with no slight skill.

A woman, if she possesses any grace, never looks to a greater advantage than when seated at the harp. There is at such a moment an inspiration, an attraction about her, that at other times she perhaps fails to inspire. As Geraldine now seated herself, and drew her harp towards her in a graceful, careless manner, which she knew how to render most effective, her ap-

pearance partook more of that of a celestial than a terrestrial being.

The white taper fingers sweep along the strings of the harp, while in bending over it she allows one stray curl to fall upon her hand. And now there swells through the lofty old-fashioned apartment of centuries back, a soft melodious strain, one of the old touching melodies of Erin, that have since become immortalised in song, and will remain so as long as harmony of sound can delight and enthral mortality.

It was a strange picture that presented itself, and those wild thrilling sounds affected it in various ways. In the spacious fire-place piles of rough-hewn logs were sparkling and crackling, every now and then shooting out their lurid flames upon the form and face of the boy Otway, who had carelessly flung himself before it, his handsome dark countenance full of frolic and mischief, as he teasingly pulled at the long ears of the large mastiff stretched before him on the matting. All that remained to the O'Neile of hope and ambition, was centred in him. Even at that early age he gave promise of no common-place abilities, and his principles (if one could imagine a boy of eight possessing any) were sound and good. His great fault—we all have some degeneracy to mark our humanity—was pride, together with no common degree of self-respect; this it was hoped would prove his safeguard against any dishonourable action in life.

Father Maguire and the O'Neile were seemingly intent upon a game of backgammon; this did not prevent their stopping to listen from time to time to the music, while in fancy each was carried back to scenes long since passed away, for a tear glistened upon the countenance of the O'Neile.

Mary was seated beside her father, occupied upon some needle-work, from which she occasionally raised her eyes to watch the progress of the game, and every now and then smiled archly when her father made

a hit in the game no wise anticipated by his reverence.

Catherine sat upon a stool by the side of the fire, where she remained partly in shadow and partly with its light falling upon her. An open book lay upon her lap, at which she gazed from time to time in a rather abstracted manner, then looked again intently into the burning logs;—perhaps at some vision or other that her fancy had conjured up, for she would raise her hand to her brow, as if to recall something or other to her memory; after which, she would look round her, seemingly in search of some one, whom not finding, she would again endeavour to concentrate her thoughts upon the book lying in her lap.

Lionel, who had been standing at first in a listless attitude, retired into the recess of one of the windows near which Geraldine was playing, and as his glance took in the different groops, so strangely diversified in that motley apartment, a look of surprised interest lit up his features, as his gaze wandered from one to the other; the scene was so entirely novel to him, so unlike anything within his experience of people and things in general, that, while the music lasted, he believed himself to be in a dream, till the last cord sweeping over the strings of the harp as Geraldine stood up from it, brought him back to the reality of every-day existence.

The O'Neile, now having finished his game of backgammon, proposed a round game of cards called "twenty-five," in which they could all take part, except Mary, who had no inclination for card-playing; she preferred to look on, and, as occasion required, replenish the glasses of punch for her father and the priest, with the interlude of now and then snuffing the candles. When they were all seated round the table, and Father Maguire in the act of shuffling the cards, Lionel pleaded his ignorance of the game in question. Otway, with a burst of delight at his cousin's not

knowing it, instantly solicited the task of instructing him, assuring him, with a boy's fervency, that it was "so easy!" But he made in his eagerness to do something, such a fuss and confusion about it, that his sister Geraldine, to his great disappointment, said that as they were to be partners she would herself explain it to her cousin. Lionel, we imagine, was satisfied at the division, while Otway was appeased by his father's offering to play with him.

"Now, young ladies, what are we going to play for? Love and diversion, you are all aware of, is the order of things here in old Ireland, whatever else they may do in foreign countries. Now, supposing for the first-named bright little jewel, we put up one finger, and for its attendant divinity we put up two, and most votes carry."

Thereupon Catherine, Geraldine, and Otway held up two fingers, and the rest of the party one. When the priest saw this he said—

"That's an old story, and often told, that the ladies always say no, when they mean yes, and yes when they mean no. So I rejoice to see that we are all of the same mind. More power to the union!"

He looked slily at Lionel while he raised the glass of punch to his lips. "But we have not yet agreed as to what sort of love it is going to be."

Catherine tried to silence him by saying, "Really, Father Maguire, it's too bad of you! Don't you think so, uncle?"

"Father Maguire is a wag, Catherine, and must have his little joke. I, for my part, don't see any harm in it."

During this colloquy, Geraldine was blushing, although her face did not display the slightest displeasure.

As the old clock in the corner struck eleven, Father Maguire stood up to go, assuring Lionel, as he bid him good-night, that he would be delighted to see him at

his humble abode, where he should always find a welcome and a glass whenever he felt inclined to turn his steps in that direction.

"You really must contrive to stay a month or two longer in order to see some real sport in the fox-hunting line. There is nothing like it in England, or any other place in the known world,—the finest pack of hounds you ever set eyes upon, belonging to a Mr. Maitland, up at the Falls. But I forgot, you have yet to make his acquaintance. My duty to you, Sir." And thus saying he left the room.

The door had scarcely closed upon the priest, when Lionel, after having wished the family good-night, and Geraldine in particular, took up his candle and departed.

Catherine was the last to linger in the room; as she looked around her, the dying embers cast strange shadows upon the time-stained floor, and the outlines of the half-visible portraits hanging above her. She stood a moment irresolute, as if lost in thought, then suddenly arousing herself, she quitted the apartment, stopping in the hall, where a light still burned, to put on her cloak, then with a hasty step she let herself out of the hall door, which she drew softly after her, without quite shutting it. She ran across the lawn till she came up to a tall dark figure, which was no other than the priest.

CHAPTER IV.

"A deep and a mighty shadow
Across my heart is thrown,
Like a cloud on a summer meadow
Where the thunder wind hath blown!—

——Alone with my hopeless sorrow:
No other mate I know!
I strive to awake to-morrow;
But the dull words will not flow!
I pray,—but my prayers are driven
Aside by the angry heaven,
And weigh me down with woe!"

BARRY CORNWALL.

SHE softly pronounced his name; he stopped abruptly, turned round with much surprise, and looking at her hurriedly, said—

"Why, Catherine, I trust nothing has happened up at the Court since I left a few moments ago?" There was no answer, and he had to repeat the question before she spoke, and then in a beseeching voice she began thus—

"Oh, Father Maguire! if you would permit me to unburthen my mind to you, and tell you all that is now oppressing it, you would save me from so much anxiety, so much fear."

"My child, this is rather an odd place and time for your confession. Come to me to-morrow as early as you like, and I shall be both ready and willing to absolve you from any little peccadillos you may have been tempted to commit, either in deed or thought; but now I insist upon your returning at once!"

He ceased speaking, extended his hand, and waved it in token of adieu. Catherine remained as if rooted to the spot, then caught the uplifted hand in both of hers, clasped it with feverish energy, and before he could anticipate or prevent the action, she knelt before him, and in a few hurried words told him the vision that she

had now, for the second time, beheld. As she ceased speaking, he burst out into a low soft laugh, as in bantering tones he accosted her—

"Why, Kate, I think you want to bewitch me, as well as yourself. I believed you to be more reasonable. Now, if instead of all this rigmarole old granny's tale, your ministering spirits had discovered to you some wonderful treasure, it would be good fortune—for instance, such as the old family about to be restored to its former power, which belonged to it fifty years ago—or, better still, you yourself in your bridal robes, and as the song says—

"With gold galore,
Above and below you,
Around and before you,"

then I should say that your imagination was enchanted to some purpose with the richness of its own fancy, and tell you to keep on dreaming. But when I see, as I now do, your persistence in deceiving and exciting your too exalted feelings, with what I may call such works of Satan as you have for some time acquainted me with, I shall at last begin to think that your mind is becoming unsettled, and shall speak to your uncle about it, so that proper measures may be taken to irradicate such monstrosities from it. As to your fears about the unexpected arrival of that English cousin, and the influence you say he is gaining over Geraldine, even admitting it to be the case, it can't injure her in any way; on the contrary, more likely in my opinion to conduce to her happiness. I would give much to see her settled in life. She is too lovely, too vain, and ambitious to be left to carry out her own wishes. Why should not this proud Saxon marry her, if he will, and take her to his own country. What assistance or comfort is she to her old father? or, in fact, to any one? She is selfish to the very heart's core, and I believe would sacrifice any one to accomplish her

own ends. She is the only Irish woman (I am happy to say I ever met) without a heart, for with that beautiful exterior of hers, she is internally a stone. She will leave few regrets behind her; all that is attractive about her, she carries in her face. I would not exchange your smile, which is too rarely seen, nay, even your prejudices, that in some instances are many, for her elegant self."

While Father Maguire was speaking, Catherine thought she heard a slight movement of the branches of the trees near which they were standing, but the night was too dark for her to distinguish any object. She spoke again.

"Father Maguire, don't wish for an O'Neile to unite herself to an enemy of her country. Far better that she should enter a convent, or indeed make any sacrifice, rather than degrade herself in that way." Then, suddenly remembering for what purpose she had come, that in the moment of her anxiety for Geraldine she had well-nigh forgotten, she returned to it.

"Then you will not help me? you will not give me any consolation in my misery? but let me return to my morbid fancies. You will not even allow me to warn my uncle that some great — some unforeseen danger threatens his happiness? You, who have known me from early childhood, and have ever listened to the temptations and weaknesses of my heart—you, who have known its almost every thought—and"—

"Catherine!" uttered the priest in a sad, reproachful tone.

She seemingly did not, or would not, notice the interruption, but continued—"and many conflicts—you to whom I have ever looked for approval and guidance"—

The priest interrupted her once more—"Yet, Catherine, one secret has never been mine—you have never made a clear confession of all that was in your heart. There was, and is, a corner in it that I, as your spiritual

guide, had a right to see into; still you had not the courage—the will to confide in me. Yet I forgive you, my child, this one weakness, which I trust you have long since conquered."

Catherine was silent, yet the priest knew by the trembling hand which still grasped his, and the half-stifled sob, what was passing in her mind. After she had sufficiently mastered her emotion, she continued—

"You now cast me off—refuse to lend credence to my tale? Then be it so! You have listened for the last time to my appeal. Now may the blessed Virgin and all the saints have mercy upon me! for I am indeed in need of it. Had I committed a robbery—or worse still—" again the rustling of branches was heard, and this time Father Maguire turned quickly round, while he said—

"Did you hear anything, Catherine?"

But she was too wretched to be affected by mere sound, and apparently took no notice of his question, but went on—

"Father Maguire, were it even murder, the Roman Church has consolation for its wretched children."

At the word "murder," the priest seized her arm, and, in stern reproachful tones, said—

"Catherine O'Neile! let me hear no more of this. Go home, and say your prayers, till your mind becomes steadier. To-morrow, at ten, I shall be in the confessional. Now God be with you!"

He turned quickly and left her. She remained for a long time irresolute and motionless in the darkness of the night, listening to the retreating footsteps of the priest. Then, with choking sobs, she began slowly to retrace her steps towards the house, and in her grief, not heeding a shadow that followed close behind her. When she reached her room she threw herself upon her bed, where she lay a long time so still, that scarcely a sound or even breathing could betray that a human form was there. Then she rose, procured a light, and taking her

breviary, she knelt down and repeated over and over again the prayers appointed by the Church, till the candle had burned low, and the short morning hours were heard from the village clock. The white face had become whiter, and the dark eyes had a distracted, troubled look in them, which told that no consolation had been given to the weary heart by her appeal to the saints.

After a few hours of feverish sleep and excited dreams, she went out into the fresh morning air, walking on till she came to a tree, underneath whose spreading branches it was her custom to sit and think. As she watched the mists clearing away from the far-off landscape, her ear caught up the distant murmur of the sea, the view of which was shut out by the high cliffs along whose fretted base the surges were beating their eternal refrain; her attention was distracted by observing something white lying on the grass at her feet. She stooped to pick it up, and found it was a small piece of paper folded tightly together, already damp with the night dew. She opened it mechanically, yet carefully, when to her astonishment she read her own name, in large, bold characters, similar to those of a child, but so legibly and steadily written, that it was evidently an assumed hand to prevent detection. Then followed these words—

"Would you know what prayer is?—read—

'Prayer, is the breathing of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward lifting of an eye
When none but God is near.'"

Her feelings upon first reading these lines were surprise and perplexity, that soon gave place to indignation and shame, for they seemed to indicate to her that her secret was known, and that she had been observed. Who could it be? She had never breathed to mortal her extraordinary pre-visions, except to the priest and her foster-

mother. Father Maguire's sacred profession forbade his disclosing any of its secrets, and she felt assured that her foster-mother would rather die than betray her. She now for the first time recalled the noise she had heard the previous night when talking with the priest. What could have caused it? and with what motive had that paper been placed where she had just found it? Undoubtedly by one well acquainted with her habits, and who had watched her well. When she had read the lines several times, till their truth and simplicity became clear to her, and the words had fixed themselves in her memory, she tore and threw the paper from her, looked nervously around, not feeling sure whether she was watched or not. She then walked from the spot, with the determination one moment of seeking the priest, and the next feeling assured that he would give her no comfort. Her religion, that before had been her solace and support, now seemed to mock her, as she endeavoured to repeat one of its prayers. She began to consider herself as one almost denounced, and destined to bear in her heart a fearful and tormenting curse.

From whom had she inherited this gift of second-sight, that only brought sorrow and bereavement to those who were dear to her, and pain and terror to herself?

CHAPTER V.

"Though vain the vision seem
To those who know not how my every thought
Is with thine image fraught,—

I send a thought to thee,
The deep unspoken essence of my love;—
Ah! shall it reach thee? shall it find a rest,
Beloved, in thy breast?

I will believe the dream—
Will fancy I can rule thy thoughts with mine,
That I have power upon that high soul of thine."

MARY ANN BROWNE.

AN hour later, Catherine entered the parlour, where she found the family already seated at breakfast. The O'Neile, in a frolicsome voice, gave her "the top of the morning," as he gazed at her with fond admiration.

"Sure, Kathleen macree, it's yourself that always brings to your old uncle the freshness of the morning dew, the perfume of the opening flowers, and the warmth of the blessed sunshine itself; and, better than all, your own bright face, blessings on it!" and he raised himself as he spoke to imprint a kiss upon the blooming countenance bending over him. "I declare, love, you are a walking reproach to lazy Geraldine, who only left her room a moment before you came in. Even my nephew, Lionel, is not quite free from censure, but then, to be sure, we must remember that he possesses English not Irish habits;" and he gave a sly wink over at him.

Catherine wore one of her most bewitching smiles as a mask to her sad heart; the brisk early morning walk, and the emotion within her to which the event of that morning had given rise, imparted a bright colour to her otherwise pale cheeks, and an unusual lustre to her eyes.

As her glance met Lionel's fixed upon her with an expression of unfeigned admiration, for a moment the

idea suggested itself to her that he might have been the writer of the paper; but as she gave him one of her searching looks, and he returned it with one of such surprised frankness, she felt assured that he would not have dared so much.

Though feeling the indifference to food which accompanies feverish excitement, she nevertheless tried to eat, and enter into business matters with her uncle, who was now taxing her memory as to the term of years upon which some of the small farmers held their land, and the coming arrears of rent, and as to whether he should turn the fallow to account this year, or still leave it for the pigs to ambulate upon. Catherine tried to give her attention to all these details, yet without feeling the interest that she generally had in all her uncle's business transactions.

Otway, Lionel, and Geraldine were deeply engaged in discussing the merits of one of the neighbouring lakes, where they intended going that day upon a little fishing excursion.

The little boy kept rushing in and out of the room in search of some beautiful variegated flies that his cousin had brought over with him from England.

The latter was now conversing in an undertone with Geraldine. Whatever he might have been saying to her was partly to be guessed at in the smiling, half-parted lips, and the abstracted manner in which she crumbled whole piles of bread upon the table-cloth beside her, while from time to time she blushed.

Mary, who sat at the head of the table, was reading the local news of the day to her father, who, when any subject in particular struck him, would abruptly pause in the middle of some calculation to listen, particularly if it were a political question of the times, whereupon he would rush into a detailed history of the parties mentioned, relating, with much humour and evident self-satisfaction, many of the jokes they used to have together in their young days. And when the O'Neile was

taken with one of his loquacious fits, he generally addressed himself to all who were within hearing, whether they were willing or not. Mary was always an interested listener, to whom her father's exaggerated accounts were pure, unvarnished truths. The O'Neile's great weakness was exaggeration. Yet in Mary's eyes he ever appeared a great hero, whose former deeds ought to have immortalised him in the opinion of all who came within the influence of his eloquent descriptions.

After having expatiated to his heart's content upon all sorts of heroics, in which he himself played the most prominent character, he every now and then stood up to suit the action to the word. At one moment fancying himself before royalty, he would bow with courteous reverence; then the next, with his hand on his heart, and assuming an admiring glance, would appear to be paying a compliment to some fair one, upon which all the family would look up with surprise, gratification beaming in their faces, at their father, who now in his poverty, could identify himself with associations of past greatness.

He would afterwards sit down, and in a pompous, emphatic manner would assure them, "It was a fact; upon my life, a fact." And to him it really had become so. He had given himself so entirely up to the idea, and had so identified himself with it, that at last it had become a part of himself. Yet there were many grounds for truth in what he related, only he drew the bow to its fullest extent without exactly snapping it. He often related the following episode of his young days:—

One night, having been invited to a masquerade given at Dublin Castle, he happened, by some unaccountable chance, to wear a domino the counterpart of one worn for the occasion by Lord ——.

In the course of the evening, while sauntering through the rooms, he was playfully tapped upon the shoulder by some unknown fair one.

After glancing at his dress, she, in a rather mysterious manner, pronounced the name of a novel then very much talked of, when the O'Neile, upon the impulse of the moment, and finding nothing better to say at the time, answered in the same playful manner, while mentioning the title of the sequel to the story just named by her.

He had no sooner done so than the unknown lady, in an assured and affectionate manner, placed her arm within his, and led him through the long suite of brilliantly-lighted rooms, till they arrived at the last, which seemed less frequented than those they had just passed through. She sank down upon one of the cushioned ottomans near, and made a sign for her companion to seat himself beside her; then, without further preface, she, in an agitated voice and manner, unfolded to his astonished ear a tale which, as he listened to it, only assured him was intended for the private hearing of another.

As she concluded, the O'Neile had no difficulty in guessing who his fair unknown really was. He became dreadfully embarrassed as the truth flashed across him, for, through one of the most extraordinary circumstances, he had heard the secret of another—and that other! However, he hesitated no longer as to how he should proceed, but bending low before the lady, raised his mask for a moment, then placing his hand upon his heart as he still bent before her, he said, in respectful tones—

"Madam, I am Denis O'Neile, of O'Neile Court, and an O'Neile, Madam, never betrays that which honour assures him should be kept inviolate. From this moment I remember no longer what was intended for the ears of another."

As he finished speaking, once more bowing before her, he quickly withdrew, but not before he had time to notice the person wearing a domino like his own advance rapidly towards the lady he had just quitted. He saw nothing more of either of them that night.

The following week, when he had almost forgotten the whole affair, one morning before he was up, his servant entered the room bearing in his hand an official-looking document, together with a very small packet. The first was an appointment upon some foreign mission, which he had long but hopelessly wished to obtain; and the other a massive diamond ring, with the motto, "*Discretion is the better part of valour,*" engraved upon the inside, together with the initials of the royal donor.

"Oh, dad! can't you show us the ring?" Otway excitedly exclaimed,

"Why, yes, I dare say I can—," then in a whisper to himself—"where the deuce have I put it? No doubt with the other relics of my grandeur, if I could only lay my hand upon it."

"But why don't you wear it, papa?" Mary artlessly inquired.

"Hem—" clearing his throat several times—"Why—it would appear too ridiculous in me to wear diamonds now, love, when my coat is almost threadbare." He threw a furtive timid glance upon his shabby clothes—"No, love, I have put all my finery away. The *garsoon* there," pointing to his little son, "will have them all some day, and you know that that will just be the same." He sighed as he said this. Poor old man, pride would not allow him to confess, even to his own children, the loss of all the old valuables that had at one time been in the possession of the family, but long since parted with. Still he indulged in the secret hope that they would all, by some miracle or other, turn up again some day, at least, so old Phil, the butler, predicted, with his usual sanguineness, and his master was too polite to think of contradicting him. Phil knew most of the secrets and degradations to which the family were reduced, on account of their changed circumstances.

Having at last satisfactorily arranged matters with his niece, the O'Neile stood up and declared his inten-

tion of joining the fishing party,—if they did not mind being hampered with an old fellow like himself.

An hour later, the jaunting-car was at the door, and the O'Neile was in the act of seating himself upon it, when Catherine, hastening towards him, in a somewhat excited manner begged him to give her a few moments hearing. He got down at her request, and allowed himself to be drawn aside. Catherine then appeared to be appealing to him about something or other, for at first he laughed at whatever she was telling him, but afterwards he became more serious, and was heard to say—

"Nonsense! why, Catherine, I am certain this continued poring over old chronicles is turning your brain. The absurd idea! and your wishing me to believe all this; it is really too ridiculous! Accidents will happen, as we all know, but as to any one knowing when and where, is utterly impossible. You must not be so childish. I must try and crush those visionary ideas of yours. Come, suppose you join us instead of wandering about some old ruin? There will be room for you, and Otway can sit on the *flirting* cushion. What do you say, Lionel, don't you think we can manage with one more?"

Lionel, thus addressed, added his entreaties to those of his uncle, but looking at Geraldine all the while, who was rather annoyed at seeing the alacrity with which Catherine accepted the invitation, for the latter quickly jumped up beside her uncle, and took the reins in her own hands, as she understood more about driving than any of the others.

She was unusually silent, and took no part in the jokes or hilarity of the rest of the party. After an hour's drive, they reached the edge of the lake, that lay stretched before them in the sunlight of an early autumn day in September, the most beautiful month in Ireland, when the flowering arbutus, with its pale

bell-shaped blossoms, perfumes the air with an agreeable fragrance. At this season a hushed repose seems to enthral nature, before the ensuing storms and decay of the end of that period of the year which it has but entered upon, as if to impart renewed strength and courage for the contest it is so surely and gradually approaching.

The party alighted close to a rough plank of wood, to which a boat was moored. They entered it one after another, followed by a sturdy peasant lad, whom they took with them to help in rowing; Catherine officiating as steer's-man, while Geraldine with careless grace did the looking-on to perfection.

When they reached the middle of the lake, they pulled in their oars, and allowed the boat to float along at pleasure, a deep silence falling upon its occupants. They severally gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the moment, and to idle and pleasant dreaming, which the warm atmosphere favoured. A deep silence reigned around, only broken occasionally by jumping fish as they incautiously caught at the luring bait, and by the far-off lowing of cattle, and by echo taking up some oft-repeated sound which it loved to repeat and prolong. Some hours passed thus, till the craving of hunger proved stronger than the romance of the moment. This necessity satisfied, as far as ham sandwiches and cold punch could contribute to it, the oars were once more vigorously plied, disturbing the repose of the placid waters. Again were heard the sounds of mirth and song, in which all heartily joined. Even Catherine, as the day wore on, seemed to forget any cause of uneasiness she might have felt, keeping up an animated conversation with her uncle, interrupted by occasional monosyllabic replies to some casual remark made by either Geraldine or Lionel; both of whom had apparently entered into the enjoyment of the hour. Yet, oddly enough, whenever Catherine unconsciously looked round, she invariably found Lionel's eyes following her movements. She naturally attributed it to mere accident,

till an event, slight in itself, and which chance brought before her, made her think otherwise.

As they were stepping out of the boat, Catherine happened to be the last to leave it, Lionel assisting her to do so. She had advanced a few steps towards the rest of the party, who were then in the act of seating themselves upon the car, when actuated by one of those unaccountable impulses for which we can often give no reason, she turned round, and saw Lionel in the act of stooping to pick up something, that he furtively put into the breast of his coat, but not before Catherine's quick glance had detected what it was.

She felt her face crimson, as she mechanically put her hand to her throat as if to assure herself that a little ribbon, that she had worn round it, was still there.

It was gone—she had evidently dropped it, and he had picked it up—yet, strange enough, not with the intention of returning it to her, or why such promptitude and secrecy in putting it away? He surely must have imagined that it belonged to Geraldine. Yet, she was not in the habit of wearing anything round her throat; and now she remembered that he must have noticed it, for each time she had met his eye all that afternoon, she happened to be tying and untying it, a common practice of hers.

Should she ask him for it before Geraldine? that would surely be the frankest way—still, what would the latter think about it? In any case he was the culprit, and must get out of the awkwardness as best he could. As she thus reasoned with herself, she waited quietly till he had joined the others, then going up to him in the most innocent manner in the world, as if thoroughly indifferent about the subject, she said—

"Mr. Herbert, you have just picked up a little ribbon? perhaps you were not aware that it was mine?" She put out her hand as she addressed him, as if waiting for it, while she looked him steadily in the face with an ex-

pression which told him plainly that it was a great mistake he had made.

He became painfully embarrassed as he drew it from its hiding-place, and muttered an apology about having been mistaken, at which Geraldine blushed as she listened, for in her vanity she firmly believed he had only taken it because he imagined it belonged to her; and as she gave him a tender glance of reproach, he must have felt the false position in which he had placed himself in Catherine's opinion, for he knew that she at least had read the truth.

The O'Neile, as he witnessed the scene, gave an expressive shake of the head as he smiled facetiously, while he muttered something to the effect of "one's not being able to put an old head upon young shoulders."

CHAPTER VI.

"Suddenly, as if arrested by fear, or a feeling of wonder,
Still she stood with her colourless lips apart, while a shudder
Ran through her frame ———"

LONGFELLOW.

THE O'Neile insisted upon driving them himself back to the Court. Catherine endeavoured to persuade him to the contrary, but this time he was obdurate, and would not yield to her demand.

Meanwhile, she became restless, and each moment when the jaunting-car swayed more to one side than the other, or when any children were seen loitering in the road, she would suddenly start up, and, in an agitated way, look round, much to the inconvenience and annoyance of Otway, who was seated upon the middle cushion between them all. They had nearly reached half way home, when the horse abruptly shied at something in the road, and then set off at such a furious

pace, that neither the united efforts of the O'Neile nor of Catherine could pull him in. They were now descending a steep hill, at the foot of which, upon each side, were two or three cabins. Before they could reach the bottom, the horse stumbled to the earth, and a piercing scream was heard, although nothing to justify the fearful cry could be distinctly seen, on account of the thick dust that was flying about in all directions.

Catherine, pale as death, threw herself from the car, seized the reins, and tried to raise the prostrate animal, but without success, though Lionel Herbert and her uncle had come to her assistance. A woman was now seen rushing out of one of the cabins, wildly flinging her arms about her, and calling madly for her boy. All stood there silent and awe-stricken, afraid to ask what it all meant, till Catherine spoke—

"In the name of heaven, let some one help me to take the child from under the horse! There may yet be time to save him!"

What a terrible light these words cast upon those assembled there! Several labourers were now seen approaching, marshalled hither by one of the biggest of the children, who was present at the moment of the accident, and who, child-like, had imprudently ran away, leaving its younger and more helpless companion to its fate. With the aid of the men, the horse was at last pulled up, when every one but Catherine and the mother turned aside, not daring to look upon the bruised and flattened mass, that lay apparently lifeless in the dusty road. The woman tried to seize hold of it, but Catherine, by a more prompt movement, had anticipated her design, and, regardless of fear, and a disinclination to touch such a heart-sickening object, she caught it quickly in her arms, and ran with it to a little spring, that was close by; and stooping down, held the face of the child under the trickling water.

After a few seconds the child slowly opened its eyes, but shut them languidly again, while the poor little

thing moaned piteously. Catherine remarked that the knee joints were broken, and that the feet hung lifeless on her arm. Without delaying an instant, she placed the child in the arms of its mother, begging of her to keep it perfectly still, till she should return with the doctor. Then, with a quick firm step, and betraying no emotion, except in the tearful eye, she jumped upon the car, after having exchanged a few words with her uncle, and disappeared, but not before Lionel (who, up to the present, seemed only conscious of Geraldine's anxiety and nervousness, at the unlooked-for catastrophe) darted forward, and politely insisted upon Catherine's allowing him to do her errand—pleading that he would be sure to find the doctor's abode. She listened patiently till he had finished speaking, then, with a rapid movement of her hand, she waved him off, saying, "that she was accustomed to driving and riding alone, and that her cousin and uncle would have more need of his services than she should." There was something so peremptory and proud in her glance, as she addressed him, that he could only bow, and retire.

During the half-hour that elapsed since she drove away, he kept continually running backwards and forwards from the cabin to the road, to look for her reappearance, but, to the astonishment of all, the doctor arrived on horseback alone. He said that he had encountered Miss Catherine as he was in the act of leaving his house, on his round of visits, that in a very few words she had acquainted him with the sad event, adding that she was going on to the Court, in order to supply herself with a few necessaries for the suffering child, and that she should return immediately.

He made them place the child upon the table, then examined the poor mangled body.

After a long and close investigation, he declared that the spinal bone and the limbs were dreadfully fractured. He did not think the child could live through the night, and, under the painful circumstances, he con-

sidered it rather a blessing than otherwise. Upon hearing this, the young mother, whose only child it was, instead of trying to occupy herself by administering to its comfort, as far as lay in her power (with the uncontrolled and reckless energy, that forms so strange a part of the Irish character), threw herself, rather than sat, upon a rickety old stool, and set up a heart-rending wailing and lamentation for her child; calling him by all the names of endearment she could think of, and, every now and then, relating with graphic clearness all his winning ways and good qualities. Yet, never once, through all her grief and excitement, casting one reproach, or accusing the authors of it, though they stood there without having the courage to offer any consolation to the wretched mother, who was soon to be left childless. It was too shocking, too heart-rending, for even the formality of offering comfort or hope.

The sound of wheels was now heard, and the next moment Catherine entered, with a large parcel in her hand, followed by Father Maguire, the latter making the sign of the cross, and repeating a prayer half aloud.

The mother no sooner beheld the priest, than she jumped up, and, for the instant, forgetting her grief at his presence, and bowing low before him, made a passage for him through the crowd, that had already assembled, till they both stood beside the still breathing child.

"Ochone! yer Riverence, and shure if he could only hear the sound of your blessed voice, it's himself he'd be again. Spake to him, yer Riverence—only spake to him! Shure Martin was always a favourite wid yer Riverence."

Then, bending down over the almost senseless thing, she whispered to it—"Martin, alanna, shure an it's his Riverence, Father Maguire, who has come all the way to see you, honey, and, it may be, to send your sowl to glory." At the thoughts which this last word suggested, the mother's grief began anew.

The boy, for a few seconds, as if conscious of the priest's presence, raised his languid eyes to his, even in the fading light of coming death, with an intense look of reverence and gratitude that was beautiful to behold. The mother gave a long, loud cry of joy, as she watched it—

"Oh, the blessed miracle! He recognised his Riverence—shure he smiled upon him, half angel as he is already—that's a great comfort to me, anyhow."

Catherine approached with a bundle of old linen that she had taken from the parcel, and gave it to the doctor to wrap the child in, instead of the dirty old rags which were thrown over it. The mother remained perfectly helpless, after having been told that the boy had only a few hours to live. Catherine decided upon staying with her till all was over.

Indeed, this office, that might have been painful to others, was welcome to her, for it made her forget her own unhappy thoughts, and her fatal foreshadowing of evil—how fatal, has been seen by the sad occurrence of a few hours back. Would she be believed now—or would she be looked upon with dread, for the misfortune that it was her destiny to foresee, yet not prevent?

This unhappy accident, dreadful as it was in all its details, was but a shadow to the one that she knew was hovering over those nearest and dearest to her; and yet, she must not, she dare not speak—the priest had forbidden her.

She prevailed upon her uncle to return home, and leave her there till morning. At first he felt disinclined to grant her request; he looked at her pale, sorrowing face, and thought how young she was to undertake so much, but, as he remembered her energy of character and self-abnegation, he consented.

She wondered if he remembered her warning of that morning, and whether he would mention it now; but he seemed to have forgotten all about it, and, kissing her affectionately upon the forehead, he turned to go.

The rest of the family had nearly all the time remained quite close to the door. As the O'Neile joined them, they asked if Catherine did not intend returning with them. He replied in the negative. Geraldine, taking it as a matter of course, urged her father to leave the abode of mourning, as she did not feel very well, after the shock that her nerves had sustained that evening. Indeed, all colour had left her face, and the beautiful blue eyes had a nervous, frightened look in them. She was placed upon the car, when Lionel, in some surprise, inquired if it would not be better to leave some one to watch over Miss Catherine O'Neile? His English notions of propriety were shocked at the mere idea of leaving a young lady, without any of her friends near her, in a poor peasant's hut, with a dying child. The O'Neile only smiled at his fears, while he said—

"Ah, I see, Lionel, you have penetrated but little into Irish life, or you would have no anxiety as to my niece's safety anywhere within a hundred miles of us here. I can tell you that in that poor cabin she is as protected, and as sacred as she would be at home, and, for that matter more worshipped too, not that she values that, or anything beyond the good and comfort she can bring with her. All those poor, rough peasants you see in there, are truer and nobler in heart than you imagine."

"I am perfectly aware of that, Sir. Pray do not misunderstand me upon that point. I know that Miss Catherine O'Neile is perfectly safe, as far as any personal insult or danger goes. Still, the scene is rather a rough and unseemly one for a young lady, not to say anything of the language she must necessarily hear, beside many other objectionable things. I have heard of Irish gatherings, and Irish wakes, and the recklessness and inebriety into which they plunge upon like occasions. And I only conclude that, were she my sister, I should rather shield her from such contact."

"In England it may be all very well, my boy, to

observe the like, but you must surely know that there is an immense difference between the English and Irish peasant. Not that I mean for a moment to disparage the first mentioned, for I know them to be steadier, and more industrious, and painstaking, than our rascals, who have the genius of leaving everything to take care of itself, and who have only their natural eloquence, wit, and humour to recommend them, and, if I may say it, a chivalrous instinct that never fails them when occasion requires. So I trust, Lionel, that I have now eased your mind with respect to Catherine, who will return without contamination of any kind, when her services can be of no further avail. I am proud of her, Sir; she is a golden girl! and more than gold to me, for its value could not purchase such another Catherine!"

This was said as they were nearing home, and without any further comment from Lionel. He already was aware of the heart-felt praise in which the old man loved to indulge, when his favourite Catherine was the subject.

As soon as the family had taken their departure, Catherine went to the mother and tried to prevail upon her to leave the child, over whom she kept groaning in utter helplessness, and every now and then deplored the fact, that the child would not make a "purty corpse," in which regret she was seconded by most of her friends. For the next best thing to wishing the deceased in glory, is to have a "purty corpse," as they express it in Ireland. One old crone said—

"Shure the Lord be praised, anyhow! but if the cratur had met his death in any natural way, than that which has taken all the beauty out of it intirely,—intirely, shure it's meself would be thankful for that same. But my heart is big when I think of the matter, and see wid me two eyes her only child disfigured and spoilt, just as it is going to die,

and the neighbours all come to look at it. Shure it's disappointed they'll be anyhow, and more's the pity."

"Shure accushla, we all must die, and it's often content we are to do that same, when our time is come, and it is the will of Heaven," said another; "but the comfort is to know that we look dacent, if only for the satisfaction of the friends we lave after us."

A few hours later the child breathed its last. There was nothing more for Catherine to do, so she left the cabin accompanied by the father of the dead boy, whom she allowed to see her part of the way home. As soon as they came to the park gate of O'Neile Court, she dismissed him.

CHAPTER VII.

"Deep into the darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token."

POE.

"Solemnly answered the sea, and mingled its roar with the dirges,
'Twas the returning tide that afar from the waste of the ocean,
With the first dawn of the day, came heaving and hurrying landwards."

LONGFELLOW.

As the man went away, she stopped short instead of entering the gate, and seemed to listen. Nothing disturbed the solemn stillness of the hour, except the occasional sighing of the trees as the soft wind stirred their branches, and now and then the distant barking of some watch-dog. It was one of those bright, mysterious, yet moonless nights, when the stars are more

distinctly visible, and seem to twinkle and glitter in light. And now, as one darted from the sky and fell to earth, Catherine's eyes followed it; she sighed out a half-formed wish, which suggested itself too late, however, to take its flight with the falling star. After a few moments' longer contemplation of the heavens, she crossed the road to the opposite side of the park, and lightly jumped the ditch that separated it from a wide, unbroken moor. She went on till she arrived at a chain of hills, which she ascended, and descended on the other side, from which was discernible a long range of table-land, extending as far as her eyes could see in the uncertain light of night, and before which rose dark and rugged cliffs. Catherine took a path to the left, when, on nearing the rocks, a little white-washed chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, became perceptible, in which a little lamp was kept burning night and day before the shrine.

She entered, and prostrated herself before the image, the pale outline of which was barely discernible in the flickering light burning beneath it. For the first time in twenty-four hours, Catherine gave vent to her grief, and every now and then prayed aloud. At one moment it seemed to her as if she heard the suspended breathing of some one quite close to her. She looked nervously around, but could not see anything to confirm her doubts; therefore she imagined it must have been her own quick respiration that had deceived her. For the last time she beseechingly raised her eyes to the figure, over which was thrown a light drapery to preserve it from the damp, when it appeared to her as if it slightly moved on its pedestal. She looked wildly at it, as she imploringly asked what she should do—in her fervour and affliction addressing it as a living saint, who had power to help and save her. A long silence followed the petition, when, to Catherine's terror, the lips of the statue appeared partly to open and give forth a sound—a sort of whispered murmur, that floated around her;

then she caught the sound of her own name. She gazed once more wildly with outstretched arms towards it, while in a voice whose tones were rendered appalling by entreaty, fear, and excitement, she whispered in broken sounds—

"Oh, have mercy upon me!" and fell back insensible upon the ground.

When she recovered her senses, she sat up, and looked round her, at first without recognising where she was; then as her wandering gaze fell upon the statue, she remembered all with a shudder, and repeating the strange words she had heard, she tried to persuade herself they were but the offsprings of her own distracted brain. Still, she wondered how they had ever occurred to her, for if she accepted them as true, she denied not only the intercession of the saints, to whom her Church taught her to pray, but, what was more dreadful in her imagination, the Virgin, whose intercession before the Almighty she believed to be all-powerful. She rose trembling, almost benumbed with the cold air that entered from the open door; she approached it, and looked out into the night, that had become quite dark, and the stars had all disappeared, from which she concluded that break of day was not far distant. A strong wind had commenced, and was blowing round the little chapel, while the murmur of the ocean had now risen to a roar. She listened long to the moaning wind, that awakened strange thoughts within her.

Of all the voices of nature, the wind is the most varied and mysterious;—it brings a combination of strange sounds from the ocean's depths, sweeping and bearing in its rushing arms the strange thoughts which on earth are breaking forth in passionate notes of joy or sadness. It finds many sympathies in its wayward course. The solitary old trees of the forest bend their heads before its irresistible force, as it caressingly passes over them; the old ruin, around whose ivied walls it wantonly strays, sighs out to it the glory of departed days—the

only song that is left to it now; as it sweeps over the mighty deep, this lends it full many a voice of thrilling and powerful memories, as if a band of invisible spirits were flying through space. Then, as it passes over the graves of the departed, who can say that it does not find an echo in the mouldering dust, and that from beneath many voices do not soar with it to regions beyond earth?

Such thoughts as these might have affected Catherine, as she stood there alike unmindful of the hour and of the darkness that surrounded her.

She turned once more into the little chapel, and falling on her knees she tried to address a prayer to the pale, cold figure above her, but the words died on her lips as if in mockery, before they could form themselves into sound. She shuddered as her eye in its nervous wandering at last fixed itself upon the opening made in the wall behind the statue, and facing the sea; for she well remembered that beneath the opening was the last resting-place of a young girl, who many years before had from remorse faded and drooped away, owing to having once forgotten to replenish the little lamp that was kept ever burning in the chapel, and that not only threw its halo of light upon the statue, but invited the wanderer upon the deep and stormy ocean to approach the haven to which its undying light, like a star of hope, pointed.

Once only in the memory of those living was its brightness missing; and upon that fatal night a number of little fishing boats, with the unhappy ones contained in them, were driven against the sharp, rugged cliffs that line the rough coast of the Atlantic.

The morning's dawn showed to the horror-stricken gaze of many a bereaved wife and mother, from whom they had parted the evening before with hope and spirits, their disfigured bodies washed in upon the sands by the advancing tide.

There was one above all others who was stricken by

this calamity; not that she had upon that fatal night lost either husband or brother in the storm that had driven the inmates of the frail barks to their death, for want of the beacon light that had never till then failed them. This was a young girl whose week it was to keep the shrine lighted (a duty that was looked upon as a privilege and honour by women of both high and low degree), and of whose melancholy fate we shall here give a short sketch, the more clearly to account for Catherine's nervousness.

It was the last evening of the seven, and upon that day the girl, whom we shall call Kitty, had gone some miles from her home to meet her intended at the house of a mutual friend of both parties. It was rather late in the evening, and she was returning with her head full of all sorts of day dreams and hopes for the future, which with the vivid fancy of youth she already half in anticipation enjoyed, and which, unhappily for poor Kitty, drove everything else out of her mind. She reached home more in a dream-like state than in one of common-place reality; that night she lay in her bed unable to close her eyes, owing to the excitement of thought that possessed her.

The storm had increased with the darkness, and now raged with such fury round the cabin that it suddenly recalled to Kitty's mind the unfortunate ones out at sea. Terrified at her own remissness, every thought of her lover, and the bright future she had pictured in store for both of them, left her; she jumped out of bed, hurriedly threw on her clothes, and then providing herself with the precious oil, in spite of the wild and stormy weather, and the late and solitary hour, she carefully and noiselessly stole out of her home, so as not to disturb any of the family, who at that moment in unconscious sleep were ignorant of the girl's movements.

Once outside the door, she flew with a beating heart and a sickening fear, in the direction of the little chapel upon the cliffs. She was often blown out of her course,

and obliged to prostrate herself upon the ground, so as to let the stormy blast pass over her. Mechanically and like one blindfolded she continued her way along the desolate moor, the obscurity of the night preventing her discerning any guiding point with which she was familiar. She knew instinctively that the chapel must be somewhere beyond the dark vista that lay extended before her in the solitude of that fearful night. The storm and the darkness had no terrors for her, and she felt that she could have encountered them for ever, were it only permitted her to reach in time that one little spot of earth which held all her hopes of happiness or despair. Alas! cannot the intensity and agony of such moments as those—moments which overtake us when we are most happy and least prepared for them—make up for hours of neglect and forgetfulness? Poor Kitty! she reached her goal, but only in time to see the first faint streaks of dawn in the east. It was too late! Nevertheless, with this terrible certainty oppressing her, she trimmed and lighted the little lamp just as she had ever been accustomed to do. Strange, incomprehensible mortals are we even to ourselves!—how, in the most critical moments of our existence, we still keep up the formula of what constitutes our daily habits! This young girl, who, regardless of the fury of the elements, had exposed herself to them, and almost hoping against hope, arrived too late for the purpose upon which every feeling of her mind was concentrated; yet the creature of custom (as we all are, though often without being aware of it), she mechanically performed a duty, though a neglected one, as if that moment was to her one of perfect indifference.

Then falling upon her face before the figure of the Virgin, upon whose dim outline were now visible a few pale streaks of light that fell through the open door from the far-off sky, she remained motionless and speechless in acknowledgment of her fault.

A restless feeling once more stealing over her, she rose

and quickly left the chapel, and went on in the direction of the beach, where she wandered about a long time watching the day breaking over the sea, and the advancing tide bringing in its melancholy freight of soulless mortality.

At this sight the apathetic feeling that had fallen upon her gave place to one of horror and remorse, and she fell senseless upon the sands—not far from the ghastly spectacle of the drowned. A short time afterwards she was found there by her friends, who having missed her, had come out to look for her.

From that day a blight fell upon the once happy careless girl, that no medical skill could counteract. All the quacks round about the place were sought for, to administer their united skill, and give concoctions of the most subtle herbs, but all was in vain.

The girl's mother, as a last resource, took her to one of the "holy wells," so celebrated and adored by the lower order in Ireland, as possessing many miraculous and healing virtues.

To one of these the sanguine mother, with her miserable daughter resorted; they remained days and nights on their bare knees, only at intervals stopping to rest from mere exhaustion and physical pain. Beseechingly and fervently they both invoked their patron saint—Saint Patrick—and the blessed Virgin, against whom the superstitious and ignorant girl believed she had committed a deadly sin.

There are certain seasons in the year when these pilgrimages are made, the people often coming from one county to another (distance in their opinion seeming to lend enchantment to their hopes). At such periods, and not far from the scene of this mortification of the flesh, were to be met with upon the public roads and fields, disease and deformity in all forms and stages, struggling on together as best they could, in order to reach this panacea of health.

For many days after Kitty's pilgrimage to the well,

she was supposed to have rallied a little from the inertness that had fallen upon her. No doubt imagination and national temperament helped to deceive both herself and friends into the belief that the waters of the "holy well" had happily not been sought by her in vain. But as time went on, to the disappointment and grief of her family, the insidious malady returned to her with redoubled rapidity. And, singular to relate, no reasoning could prevail upon her to see her betrothed, who was broken-hearted at the fearful turn affairs had taken. The poor girl looked upon him as the chief cause of her neglected duty. Her dying wish was that she might be interred upon the top of the cliff outside the chapel, as a warning to others, who, like her, in the giddiness of their heart might be tempted to forget what they owed to duty. She firmly believed that her spirit would hover over the spot, and prevent any further mischief to those at sea.

Now, as Catherine looked out upon the spot where the solitary mound of earth marked the penitent girl's last resting-place, a strange supernatural fear crept over her; she thought of that which the girl with her dying breath had prophesied. It seemed to her—(of what is not the mind capable in moments of intense fear?)—as if an impalpable form was soaring over the grave. The wind had subsided, while a mysterious hush appeared to rest upon all around; the very waves of the ocean swept on as gently as clouds; even the leaves of the trees, planted near the chapel, stood motionless. A coldness, as if it were of death and the grave, was creeping over her; with a desperate effort she rose from her knees, and groped her way along the outside of the chapel, till she stood over the mound of earth. She threw herself beside it, till all fear had gradually passed away from her heart. The events of the morning returned to her mind, and she thought of the contents of the paper found by her; she involuntarily began to repeat the words therein written—they had a

strange, soothing influence upon her; then she looked up to the dark clouds, and repeated, half aloud :—

"The upward lifting of an eye
When none but God is near."

Day was breaking as she entered the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I long to lay this painful head
And aching heart beneath the soil,
To slumber in that dreamless bed
From all my toil.

Hark! a strange sound affrights mine ear,
My pulse,——my brain runs wild,——I rave;
—— Ah! who art thou whose voice I hear?
'I am The Grave.'"

MONTGOMERY.

UPON one of those dull, short days in November, when a thick, soft, almost imperceptible rain was falling, that damps rather than wets one's clothes, and is so frequent in Ireland, that the people there have so far deceived themselves into calling it "feine moist weather" (the correct appellation—a rainy day—is never heard), a young girl might have been seen wending her way in the direction of a long line of little cabins. She was dressed in a dark woollen skirt, looped up, and about her shoulders was wrapt a bright red cloak, the hood of which was drawn over her head, yet partly admitted to view the pale face beneath, with its bright dark eyes, that had now a half frightened and settled purpose in them. There was no genial smile lighting up the parted lips,—in its place sat dull despair.

It was Catherine O'Neile, who, in spite of wind and rain, now hurried on her lonely way, till she stood before the door of one of the afore-mentioned little huts. She

hesitated a moment before raising the latch, hearing voices within; they gradually subsided when she opened the door, and with the usual salutation of high and low in Ireland when entering a house, she said—"God save all here!" There was a general movement at her appearance, and a tall powerful man, in a long blue frieze coat and knee-breeches, with dark blue hose falling about his legs, stood up from a wooden bench, upon which he, his wife, and two sons had been seated partaking of the mid-day meal; this consisted of steaming potatoes turned out upon a rough deal table, a piece of fat bacon placed on a broken saucer was evidently intended as the target of the potatoes, which when stripped of their jackets by the nimble nails of the parties interested in the game, were then aimed without intermission at the tempting bait, which they called "potatoes and point."

The two boys presented a grotesque appearance with their dishevelled hair, bare feet and tattered garments; yet they looked the picture of health and happiness. The mother was a handsome laughing matron, with a rather large mouth, but with a set of teeth that an empress or an advertising dentist might envy, so beautifully even and brilliantly white were they.

The family all rose as Catherine saluted them, and began wiping their mouths with the backs of their hands. The man answered her greeting with—"The top of the morning to you, Misch Kate;" and the woman, who was Catherine's foster-mother, said, as she dusted with her apron the proffered stool—

"Honey, won't you be plazed to take a seat? Shure it's glad we are to see your purty face anyhow, and long life to it! And how is the masther, and all the quality up at the Court? finely, I hope! Now you won't be above taking a pratee wid uz?"

At this invitation, Catherine, without any ceremony, and to their great delight, before sitting down, went over to the table and taking one of the hot potatoes in

her hand, playfully passed it from one to the other in her endeavours to cool it. Whatever her errand was, she did not then explain it, but waited patiently till the last of the potatoes had disappeared; when the father and sons, after crossing themselves devoutly, stood up to return to their daily labour in the neighbouring fields; yet not before Paddy Houghlahan, who was a wag in his way, had a little desultory conversation with Catherine, while his wife was scraping up the remnants of the meal in order to set them before the pigs.

"Now, Misch, if I might make so bowld as to ask, maybe it's yourself that can enlighten me, as to whether the masther has made up his mind to send the black colt to-morrow to the fair? Shure, he'll never have a finer chance of getting his price for it, for it's the talk all round the country and in the sheebeens (public-houses),—saving your presence!—that Squire Lalor has come down wid a bet, that it's himself can bring to the fore, one that will take it out and out; but it's meself and the boys that won't believe a word of that same,—no, not if it were there before uz in black and white. For, shure, that would be black trayson to the masther, and go agin our principles intirely."

Then, perceiving that Catherine did not reply to his remarks on that subject, he went on to another, with the most perfect ease.

"Begorra, Misch Kate, and shure it's Masther Otway who is growing an illigent young gintleman! So spurrited like, anyone can see wid half an eye, that he comes from the ould stock,—bones and all. And it's for sartin that he's going to furrin parts to be edicated?"

"Yes, Pat, the end of next year he will leave us for a school in England. His uncle wishes it, and, as he intends to make him his heir, we must abide by his arrangement, as far as Otway is concerned."

"The main miser! I ask your pardon, Misch, but when I think that he is wallowping in gold and diamonds, and sees his own blud-relations want, and

yet won't as much as stretch out his dirty hand to help them, shure it's meself blushes at the like, that shouldn't, every time I hear his name."

"Pat, he has surely a right to do what he likes with his own? We have no lawful claims upon him, and are grateful for the notice he takes of the boy, and having him occasionally to stay with him. You know that Mr. Herbert, who is now at the Court, has a better right to his notice than Otway, yet he's not jealous of the preference shown to his little cousin, although were Otway not in existence, he would surely be made the old gentleman's heir, for want of a nearer."

"Still, I think it a pity, Misch, that one of the O'Neiles should be sint away among those traytors of 'Lassennachs,' as we have it in Irish; shure it's naughting to be proud of, he'll pick up in their company."

Catherine, drawing herself up with dignity—"An O'Neile, Pat, is invulnerable, where his honour and his country are concerned. We have no fears of his being perverted——"

She had scarcely said this, when she stopped abruptly, and a crimson flush overspread her pale face, for she remembered another O'Neile, who was very dear to her, who had not verified her words. Honest Paddy chose, at this moment, to have his attention suddenly attracted by some phenomenon in the air, invisible to other eyes except his own, and only became conscious that Catherine was still addressing him, as, after a little time, she continued—

"I should have wished Otway to have studied in his own country, but you know very well, Pat, that beggars cannot always be choosers."

Honest Paddy, as he heard these words, reddened to the very roots of his hair; while a sudden flash darted from his eyes, he, in an excited voice, exclaimed—

"Oh, Misch Kate, unsay that dirty word! that it should ever have come out of your own purty mouth!

Shure, the O'Neiles are fit to hold a candle before the best in the land, were he an emperor himself—the grand ould stock! Beggars! Och, Misch, it's a bowld man, and a very bowld man, that would have the courage to throw such a demaining word as that at me this blessed day. Beggars! Shure, it's many a proud man would be glad to change places wid the masther any day—aye, and die and spill every dhrop of his heart's blood for him, and be glad to stand in his shoes. Don't say that word agin, Misch Kate, for it makes my blood turn to water like—don't, Misch!" and the rough yet tender-hearted peasant drew his sleeve across the upper part of his face, and held it there many minutes.

Catherine was moved at the generous impulse of the man, who held the name of O'Neile as something sacred. She put out her hand, and grasped that of Paddy, which she pressed within her own soft one. She felt a tear fall upon it, as she turned away from him, and entered the cabin in search of her foster-mother.

"Colleen dhe (dark-haired girl) of my heart!" were the first words that Nora (Catherine's foster-mother) addressed to her, as Catherine threw herself on a stool at her feet, and, covering her face with her hands, burst out into a passionate fit of uncontrolled weeping, while she rocked herself to and fro, and uttered, in a voice broken by sobs—

"Oh, Nora, what will become of us—of me? And to think that I cannot prevent it—cannot forewarn. It is too dreadful what I have seen this time—too fearful!" Then in an abrupt tone—"But I *will*—I must—anything to save him!" Despairingly—"Save him! Nothing can save him; he is doomed—doomed—and I—I know it, and yet I dare not confide in any but you, Nora, for I should not be believed—I should be derided, laughed at, aye, even accused of insanity. But you, Nora, you at least know the fatal truth, for has it not often—alas! too often—been proved to you?"

"Miss Catherine, honey, unburthen your mind to

me—do, accushla. Shure, it's asier you'll be after it. You've not been after having another vision of——"

Before she could utter the name, it died unspoken upon her lips, as a sudden and fearful clap of thunder shook the mud walls of the cabin, causing the woman and the frightened girl to look at each other with ghastly terror in their faces. Nora crossed herself, while her lips muttered a prayer. Another and more violent clap followed the first. Catherine, the strong-hearted, brave girl, who was never known to give way or evince any signs of fear at either fortune or weather, now, in an agony of fright and despair, threw herself at the feet of her foster-mother, and buried her face in her lap. She remained motionless in this attitude till the storm had nearly passed. Nora appealed to her, and caressingly tried to raise the hidden face, over which the long, dark hair now fell in thick masses.

"Avourneen, listen to me, darling—to your own Nora, who has always been able to give you the little bit of comfort, an' shure this time it won't fail me, anyhow. But first open your heart to me, and tell me how many figures you saw in the vision this time, and if—if "—the words fell tremblingly from her lips—"*he* was there?"

"Alas! yes, she and the Englishman stood one upon each side of him, with their arms encircled above him; a shadow, wearing my form came between them, it pointed threateningly to something in the distance—what, I could not distinguish, and as I strained my eyes to see what it was, a veil seemed to envelope the group, then gradually faded into almost darkness, and when I looked up again twilight had set in. Then, for a moment, I believed that I must have fallen asleep, and dreamed the whole fearful vision; but my delusion was but momentary, for old Nanny, the lodge-keeper, at that very moment appeared and told me that she was sure I must have been conversing with the fairies, as she had been watching me from the other side of the

hedge during the last hour, without daring to interrupt me, and also too fascinated to take her eyes from me. She went on to say how she by chance saw me come and sit down, at first in a rather listless attitude; then, after I had remained thus for some time, I suddenly raised my head, while my eyes seemed to fix themselves on vacancy, with an expression of wonder and horror, as if they were beholding some unseemly sight. Nanny felt overpowered and frightened at my manner. She rose, and looked around in the direction my eyes were taking, yet she could not see anything to explain my strange excitement; at last she came slowly towards me, calling me by name, till she stood by my side. At that moment my instincts had returned to the objects that surrounded me. I stood up, stared at her wildly, and then, without exchanging one word with her, rushed from the spot.

"That night I never closed my eyes, and arose with the dawn, determined to see Father Maguire and confess all, without reserve, to him. I had nearly reached his house with that intention, when my heart failed me, and I returned with my purpose shaken and my fears augmented, for I dared not tell him. Do not look at me so beseechingly, Nora; I repeat, I dared not tell him the dreadful fears and presentiments of evils that are oppressing me. I know, too well, what he would say, from previous attempts to gain his indulgence and a hearing upon the subject. No, Nora, Father Maguire, with his strong intellect and common sense (though still I know him to be imbued with many of the superstitions of his country), would, for my only consolation, have told me, that I had been dreaming—deceiving myself, and that an evil power was at work within me."

As Catherine uttered the last sentence, Nora's face turned deadly pale, while she trembled all over, and for a moment—but only for a moment—a doubt appeared upon her features; it soon passed away, and she said, in solemn tones—

"Miss Catherine, may all the saints be between you and harm!"

Then, as if angered and surprised at her own doubts in connection with the child that she had nursed and tended from the moment of its birth, she now passionately folded her in her embrace,—the strongest proof that she could give of her belief in Catherine's being in the keeping of a higher Power.

"You remember, Nora, before the unforeseen and fatal death of my brother Mark, who was drowned at sea, the strange vision I had respecting him, and how, to ease my mind, even before confiding in you, I went to Father Maguire and confessed all to him. He, for the moment, doubted my reason, and exhorted me to discard and look beyond such deceptions, as he called them. And indeed, Nora, I am assured and feel that he but did his duty; but if he could have looked into my heart then! Oh, if he could look into it now, what torture should I not be spared! Where shall I now find comfort and consolation if my religion—my Church shuts me out from them! Oh, that it were a delusion, aye, even madness—anything better than to know and feel that the dread reality must come!"

"Who knows, Miss, but that it may be sent as a sort of warning, to give you time and opportunity of preventing it."

"Ah, Nora! you know better than that, and you know me better."

The last sentence was spoken with a half reproachful, half melancholy intonation of voice, that but too surely expressed conviction of its truth.

CHAPTER IX.

" Around thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green :
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain,
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall ;
And trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away, thy children leave the land."

GOLDSMITH.

SOME five or six miles distant from O'Neile Court, stood a handsome square stone mansion, called the " Falls," belonging to a Mr. Maitland, and occupied by him and a maiden sister. Although they were such near neighbours, the O'Neile and he very seldom met more than once or twice in the year, and then generally at some public dinner, or during occasional visits that courtesy exacted. Mr. Maitland was magistrate for the county, and respected by all who knew him. His age might have been about forty. He was a fine looking man, and the principal charm was in his bearing, which, though haughty and reserved, was condescending and unbending when occasion required. One felt in his presence that some great grief had been his through life, and that it had partly left its freezing influence upon his countenance and manner. He was thought proud by those who could not understand the eccentric side of his character. He had lived many years abroad, mostly in Spain, where it was whispered, he belonged to some secret anti-monarchal society. What his religious principles were, remained a matter of surmise and doubt ; he was never seen to enter any place of worship, at least since his youth. Yet in his laboratory, where he passed the greater part of his time, was to be seen, upon the table at which he usually sat, an enormous old Bible in the Chaldean tongue, that his own servant affirmed to have seen him poring over. Still he never

mentioned the subject of religion, and in fact was looked upon by all the peasantry as little better than a heathen; not even when a funeral procession went by, was he observed to take off his hat in reverence to the dead.

He had a passion for chemistry and experiments of all kinds; many and strange were the sounds that were heard proceeding from his laboratory in the dead of night, when all in the house were supposed to be wrapped in slumber.

Catherine was a frequent visitor at the Falls, and a great pet of Miss Maitland's, who, partly an invalid, in spite of her delicate health, superintended her brother's establishment, and went about administering to the wants of the poor in a little pony carriage, driven by herself, in which she carried all sorts of necessaries, such as clothing and food for their use.

She idolised her brother, to whom she looked up as a superior being, always showing great deference to his wishes and opinions. Margaret Maitland had not been without her share of sorrow and trial, and perhaps that was one of the strongest ties which united brother and sister, and made one home theirs, for they had suffered in common. Very few, to whom her history was unknown, whilst looking upon the placid brow, and mildly-beaming eyes, would have imagined that there had been such a thing as a disappointment in her life,—and a sad, and bitter one too,—for, on her bridal eve, as she sat careless and happy in her room, surrounded by the bright faces of youthful friends, who were to partake in the ceremony of the morrow, the sudden and dreadful news was brought to her, that her bridegroom, on his way to her, had been thrown from his horse, and had expired before assistance could reach him.

For months, after this shock, she lay upon a sick bed, hovering between life and death; yet, with the assiduous care which her brother, all through her long illness, unceasingly bestowed on her, youth and

nature triumphed in the end. When she became convalescent, he took her abroad, where they resided some years.

When she returned once more to her home, great was the astonishment of those who had known Margaret Maitland in happier days, at the change that a few years had made in the former blooming and joyous girl of twenty.

It was not that she had aged, but the buoyancy of heart and step, the bloom of health, had left her form for ever. She had become a confirmed invalid, but not such as to incapacitate her from performing her necessary duties as head of her brother's house, for he intrusted everything to her care. Neither murmurs nor regrets were ever known to pass those pale suffering lips; at times she was even cheerful.

Since her return from abroad, she had ceased to make one of the congregation of the little chapel of Gillenddy; yet she was a true Christian, and had a little oratory fitted up near her own rooms, where she spent many an hour in silent and earnest prayer.

Report said (what will it not say?) she had changed from the faith that had been hers and that of her forefathers from time immemorial, and this was the only fault that was not forgiven her. Even Catherine, who loved her, and admired her fortitude and resignation (she had been made acquainted with her sad tale), was sometimes aroused to anger and contempt, which she could not always conceal, when she remembered that she had been false to her religion.

Still no words on the subject had ever been exchanged between them, except upon one occasion, which we shall take this opportunity of relating.

One day Miss Maitland, feeling rather indisposed, had sent to beg of Catherine to come and read to her. The latter having seated herself upon a chair at the bedside, took up the book that had been placed in her hand by the invalid, and began reading at the page

indicated, without having once remarked the title. She had not proceeded far, when Miss Maitland perceived that every now and then she made an abrupt pause, and that her voice, a few moments before so musical and steady, now suddenly became broken and harsh. At last, with burning cheeks and flashing eyes, she threw it down, as in trembling and excited tones she said—

"I *will* not read another word, even to gratify you!"

Then in an imploring voice she continued—"Oh, Miss Maitland, let me throw it into the fire!" She hastily rose from her seat with the resolve of carrying out her intention, when Margaret Maitland, weak and suffering as she was, seized her arm, raised herself up in bed, and in a solemn yet calm voice said—

"Catherine, you know not what you would do! Give me the book. I can read it, when I am better, for myself."

There was a silence—a painful, prolonged silence—during which, Catherine's smothered sobs were alone heard; she sank upon her knees before the bed, and, burying her face in the clothes, tried to overcome her emotion. Although no word had been spoken by either, yet Margaret Maitland guessed what was passing in the young girl's heart; for she put out her white emaciated hand—the one still bedecked with the betrothal ring, which now hung loosely on the thin, wasted finger—and laid it with a look and a movement of unutterable affection and pity upon Catherine's bowed head; then caressingly stroking back the dark, wavy hair, she plaintively said—

"My poor, poor Catherine!"

These accents of pity had more effect in arousing Catherine, than any sharp language could have done. She rose quickly from her kneeling position, while the emotion, which a moment before had seemed to conquer her, now disappeared, as she spoke in rapid and bitter tones—

"Miss Maitland, you and my mother were once dear friends, and not in any mere sentimentality, but in a real feeling—a bond—which is the purest and strongest that Heaven can bestow, that of one faith and one God."

A smile of pride and joy came over her countenance as she continued—"My mother died as she had lived, adoring and believing in the worship that was bequeathed to her by her ancestors. Oh, Miss Maitland, it is very hard to bear the reverses of fortune and the contumely of this world, and whatever bitter fate life may have in store, still"— her face was beautiful now with enthusiasm, energy and emotion—"all this would be as nothing, if my former faith were still mine. What can or ought to change that? In all other things we may be trivial, as long as we remain steadfast in that, for it is God's unchangeable gift and solace to man's heart in all things, times, and places. Bear with me awhile, Miss Maitland, for a great grief has come to my heart since it has convinced itself that you —you, so good, so beloved, so true in all else—have forsaken the faith in which you once so trustingly believed. Our unhappy conquered country has nothing left to it of the past but its religion, which was that of all civilised nations, till that man, Luther, came and upset it for his own purposes."

"Catherine! how can you allow your reason to overcome your judgment? To him—to Luther, what do we not owe? Only think of the precious, the inestimable benefit he has bestowed upon us—an open Bible, for all people to read, mark, learn, and be guided by. They want no other counsellor. That has been given by inspiration of God, and His glory alone ought to be the motive of all human actions. Only think, Catherine, of the thousands of ignorant souls in this our unhappy land, who have never heard that Word, except in a tongue foreign to them, and then only such portions of it as their priests may think fit to choose."

"But one must not do evil that good may come of it, and Luther did so. He broke a vow registered in heaven, which should have been sacred, a vow which, in an hour of peril, he voluntarily took upon himself."

"Yet think, child, that it was faith, conviction, and inspiration, that induced him to break it. Oh, think, Catherine, what his sufferings, his struggles, must have been, before he did so. What fear! what abnegation! and, above all, think how God must have been with him to bring about that great——"

Before she could finish the sentence, it was taken up by Catherine—

"You would say the Reformation?"

Her eyes dilated, and her voice had a choking sound as she pronounced the hated word.

"Oh, how blest was this land before it came! We cannot roam any distance amid our green and neglected plains without seeing the ruins of some ancient church or monastery. At the time when the Reformation reached our shores, they were all flourishing; no tax was levied to build up or sustain them, for the revenues of the Church supplied all; but when it came, they passed into other hands, that let the churches go to ruin; and when they had allowed them to do so, they then turned round on us Catholics, and by Act of Parliament made us rebuild them. Shame! shame! What if it did bring a new doctrine? it brought also much that was bad with it; for the immorality and vice that followed were its most striking features; a disregard of every law of man characterised it, for if men became better in faith, they also became worse in works."

Catherine now ceased speaking from mere exhaustion and excitement, while Miss Maitland, in a calm assured voice, said—

"Catherine, you know that there are light and shade, sunshine and cloud, over all things, both good and evil; yet we do not ask why it is so, because we know

that it must be. We should not always accept the dark side of philosophy. Do you not know that many things, good, wise, and pure in themselves, can have false interpretations put upon them by man's sophisms and distrust? We must believe in the good because we know it to be so, without analysing it; and reject vice because we feel it to be vice. 'To the pure all things are pure.' Let this be the case with you, my child. Truth will speak for herself through all ages, and through all changes, as she has done; and let us be thankful that it is so.

"Now, we will not talk any more upon this point, for it only excites enmity between us, and that is extremely painful to me, as I am sure it must be to you, my dear Catherine. You know, dear, that the best of friends have seldom been known to agree, when the subject between them has been either religion or politics; only, in concluding, I should like to say a few more words to you.

"A few years back, at a period when I was almost broken-hearted and past hope of consolation, Providence pointed out a way to me that I had never dreamed of before.

"One day I happened to be strolling along one of the picturesque green lanes that are met with in the neighbourhood of almost every English village. It was a Sunday morning, and upon reaching the end of the lane a country church stood before me, surrounded by its old-fashioned burial-ground, over which many a spreading willow threw its wide sheltering boughs. I approached to look at some of the old tombstones, when an unaccountable feeling prompted me to enter the church, and sit down upon one of the seats near the door, where I imagined I was less likely to be observed, and, as it happened, before the sermon had begun, for the clergyman was just in the act of entering the pulpit.

"The subject chosen for his discourse was taken

from the Sermon on the Mount: 'When ye pray, use no vain repetition, as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.' I need not dwell, Catherine, upon the simple, beautiful manner in which it was explained, nor the serious impression it made upon me. Suffice to say, it induced me to go many following Sundays, till at last my heart and my reason were both touched and convinced, that there is only one Mediator between God and man. All the past years of my life that had been given to praying to images, were from that time forth looked upon by me as something so false, so humiliating, shewing such a want of confidence and trust in a higher Power, that I could only wonder, and regret the years that I had bestowed upon an imaginary worship. But how different it is now!"

As she finished speaking, a smile of peace and thankfulness came over her countenance, Catherine meanwhile gazing at her with a reproachful look, that partook of fear, doubt, and pity. Margaret Maitland understood it well, and went on to another subject.

"Do you know, dear, that Mr. Herbert has been over to see Edward, who seems to like him rather better than he did at first?" Then, remarking Catherine's stare of astonishment, she continued, "Pray don't look so horror-struck, child. You know that Edward is a cosmopolite, and for that reason finds one nation as good as another."

"I am not so liberal in my sentiments, Miss Maitland, for I can appreciate likes and dislikes, and therefore feel no sympathy with negative people, who for the most part are either opinionless or brainless. I like a good hater, when necessity requires it."

"My dear Catherine, whatever your prejudices against English people may be, individually I don't think you ought to encourage such, as perhaps you are aware that you yourself are connected (though distantly) with some of them, consequently they have a slight claim upon your indulgence."

"Can you wonder, Miss Maitland, at my hatred of a nation that has betrayed us in the tenderest and holiest feelings of the human heart? Look around this once blessed and beautiful country, now almost a desolate wilderness. How came it to be so? Was it not the work of treachery, that spared neither age nor sex? England, that robbed the Catholics of Ireland of their rights, and by so doing, shut them out from all knowledge and universal enterprise, how has she not degraded us! and having done so, she then, in the spirit of cowardice, reproached us with our misfortunes. After having taken all from us, she insulted us. Let us have at least equality and a free Church, for without, Ireland will never be at peace."

"That would never do, Catherine, we cannot; besides, you forget that forty thousand English Protestants were massacred by the Irish Catholics in the Rebellion of 1641."

"Oh, no, I do not—nor that the Roman Catholics were afterwards put to death by way of retaliation. I have a very faithful memory for such things."

"But you know, child, that Ireland, at the time Henry II. conquered it, had degenerated, and was almost in a state of barbarism, while its several kings were continually at war amongst themselves, and that one of them—I blush to say it, as you will to hear it—sold his kingdom to England."

"That may be, yet, before this faithless king betrayed her, she was free from all foreign invasion, and led a peaceful, happy life, devoted to piety and learning. No, Miss Maitland, I shall never cease to hate the English as a nation—never! And surely you must be aware of what the revenues of the Irish Roman Catholic Church are composed?—pence, patches, and potatoes, things that even in themselves are humiliating. Then look at our places of worship, roofless hovels, tumble-down barns; and to think that this religion includes nearly a third of the population—monstrous! While this new

Church"— with a trembling, almost inaudible voice— "your Church, has well-paid clergy preaching to—— to what? to empty benches. Rest assured, Miss Maitland, that till some change takes place in Church property, there will be no prosperity—no union in this unhappy country."

"Catherine, I think you feel all those things too deeply." But Catherine went on as if not heeding her—

"Oh, Ireland! thou far west of the Old World, lying in beauty, encircled by the free, wild ocean, that sings to thee ever, in undying strains of freedom, of that dear, heaven-born, inalienable freedom that has, alas! been torn from thee! what hast thou left thee now? Oh, Erin—whose verdure recalls to us, as we gaze upon thee, the blessings of hope, that, oasis-like, reflects itself around thee as if in mockery of thy doom—oh, that my sighs, my tears, and my sorrows for thee and thy misfortunes, could remove the darkness that has fallen upon thee! And to imagine that I can so easily forget and forgive all our wrongs! No, Miss Maitland, it cannot be."

"Yet, I know, Catherine, that some day, however distant, you will also feel as I do now; that is my hope, therefore I can forgive you. When next this subject shall be touched upon by either of us, you will be the one to ask for counsel, and I to give it."

CHAPTER X.

"Away, away, my steed and I,
Upon the pinions of the wind,
All human dwellings left behind;
The sky was dull, and dim, and grey,
And a low breeze crept moaning by—
I could have answered with a sigh—
But fast we fled, away, away,
And I could neither sigh nor pray;
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane;
But, snorting still with rage and fear,
He flew upon his far career:———"

BYRON.

A FEW months previous to the scene just related, Catherine had been solicited by Miss Maitland to join her in her Spanish studies, in which her brother assisted her, being himself a proficient in the language. The proposal was gratefully accepted by Catherine, who had long wished to acquire a knowledge of that fascinating tongue. Her mother, who was of Spanish origin, and had spent some of her early years in that country, would often beguile the tedious hours of her widowhood in recalling many reminiscences of those days to her little Catherine, whose quick ear and retentive memory treasured up every word, which was remembered many years after the gentle voice she loved so well to listen to was silent for ever. In order to be present at the lessons, Catherine would come unattended, and on horseback, to the Falls, and not unfrequently remain there the whole day.

A few days after the events described in the last chapter, Catherine had come as usual to take part in the lesson. On entering the large, comfortable drawing-room, she found no one there; but books and writing materials were placed upon a table near the window. Catherine, whose thoughts were running over the

occurrences of the last few weeks, was in anything but an agreeable state of mind. At one moment she thought of confiding all to her mother's friend; then she remembered the past scene, with which we have already acquainted our readers, and the strong conviction expressed by the other. Her pride rebelled against the idea, and she determined to suffer anything rather than tell her the fears that were now oppressing her.

Believing herself to be alone, she sighed deeply, as she said, aloud—"How difficult it is to appear other than we feel!"

The words had scarcely passed her lips, when she heard a slight movement in the direction of the window, and approaching it, to her dismay, she found Edward Maitland, partly hidden by the curtain, endeavouring to secure the cord of the blind, that had evidently become unfastened. He turned quickly round, as if only that moment aware of her presence, and began offering an apology for not having noticed her entrance.

After one or two common-place remarks, he excused himself for leaving her, as he said, for the purpose of finding his sister, who was somewhere about the house. As he was leaving the room, he turned round abruptly towards her, yet, by some strange caprice, checked the words that he was just upon the point of uttering—then hesitating a moment, he said, with some slight embarrassment (a very unusual thing with him, and what Catherine's instinct told her was far removed from his first thought, whatever that might have been)—

"I trust, Miss Catherine, that to-day I shall have an apt pupil in you; and that you have not forgotten to translate the little sonnet you promised to have ready for this lesson?"

Catherine said "Yes," and then "No." She had been debating in her own mind whether he had really heard her exclamation as she entered the room; and, thus, before she could find an answer to his question, he

was gone, and the door had closed upon him, apparently without her embarrassment being noticed. After a short time he returned, accompanied by his sister, who welcomed Catherine, and reproached her, in a playful manner, for being so behind time, as she expected her an hour before, and was fussing about in one of the old lumber-closets up-stairs, where Edward had agreeably surprised her by the announcement of her arrival.

Edward Maitland, during this little explanation, was occupied in giving some orders to a servant, who had entered with some intelligence or other for his master.

During the lesson, Catherine was rather absent in manner, occasionally giving an answer quite opposed to the meaning of the question put to her; and when she was reading aloud, her sighs, unknown to herself, became so frequent, that Miss Maitland at last put down her book, and asked her if anything was the matter. Whereupon Catherine would blush, and reply in the negative. Edward Maitland seemed to take no notice of her, and, if anything, was more exacting than usual—often calling her attention to errors she was unconsciously committing.

The lesson over, he stood up and looked at his watch, then wished both his sister and Catherine good-bye, saying he regretted very much not being able to dine with them that day, as he had some very important business to attend to, a short distance from home, which would in all probability detain him till late that night. He hoped that Miss O'Neile would favour his sister with her company till the next day, and by so doing, give her the pleasure of her society, and himself the agreeable assurance that he was leaving Margaret with a companion. Then, with a courteous bow, he left them.

After dinner, they both sat enjoying the cosy, careless hour of thought, with only the blaze from the cheerful fire to throw its magic around them. They chatted for a little time, then lazily subsided into the

undisturbed reflection of their several fancies, with their gaze fixed upon the glowing embers. What did they imagine they saw there? Perhaps many a departed scene of what had been, or might have been; or dreamed of some gone from their sight for ever; indeed, of all that fills the human heart with retrospection, longing, regret, and unreasonableness. Many loved faces seem to look out at us from the fire—faces we may never see again as we saw them last—and many, perchance, it were better to remember as they appeared to us then, with the charm that our imagination lends to them still, for who can foresee, when friends next meet, the shadows that may in the meantime have come over them? The flight of years changes, not only our homes, but our hearts—for who ever meets as last they parted? Time brings a change in all we love.

Having sat thus silently, unmindful of the hour, Miss Maitland was the first to break the silence that had fallen upon them, by asking Catherine to sing to her. She rose, and going over to the piano, opened it, and began singing a simple touching ballad of her country. She possessed one of those voices that imperceptibly steal upon the senses, awaking all that is good and genuine within us. Although it had received but little cultivation beyond what Miss Maitland had upon different occasions bestowed upon it, yet it seemed created to convey to the heart the illusions that music has the power of calling forth, and which we all, more or less, indulge in.

Catherine shut the instrument, and then came over to preside at the tea table; an office she usually took upon herself when they were alone.

"How I wish, Catherine, that Edward had been at home this evening, to hear you sing!"

"Mr. Maitland hear me sing!"—in some surprise—"I have always understood that he is no lover of music?"

"I thought so, too, Catherine, till one day, when you happened to be singing, he entered the room unobserved

by you, and, to my astonishment, remained in an immoveable attitude near the door till you had finished your song; then he left the apartment as noiselessly as he had entered."

Catherine's curiosity was excited upon hearing that the misanthrope, as she imagined Edward Maitland to be, should have deigned to waste his valuable time in bestowing it upon such a trivial pastime as a song. She asked Miss Maitland if she could remember which one it was?

"To be sure I do—your favourite one, and which you invariably sing."

"Then it must be 'The Harp that once through Tara's Halls?'"

"The very one. I believe I have forgotten to tell you, that the last time Edward was in Dublin, he chanced to meet Thomas Moore at the house of a friend, and there had the exquisite pleasure of hearing him sing that song. He has assured me that he never heard anything before to equal the pathos and soul that he threw into it."

Catherine, with sparkling eyes, exclaimed—"How I should like to hear Mr. Moore sing some of his beautiful melodies! I am told that they are not published yet. 'Tara's Halls,' with one or two others, I obtained as a great favour from an ardent admirer of his—as we all are."

When the tea-service was removed, Catherine read aloud to Miss Maitland till eleven o'clock, when the latter began to feel uneasy at her brother's protracted absence. Every sound in the house caused her to interrupt the reading, in the hope that he had returned. Catherine at last succeeded in assuring her that there was no cause for uneasiness, as she had heard Mr. Maitland say that it was very uncertain at what hour he should return. When next Catherine accidentally looked up from her book, she perceived that Miss Maitland had fallen asleep.

She placed the book beside her upon the table, and allowed herself to fall into a train of thought, unconsciously closing her eyes as she did so. She had not long indulged in her reverie, when she thought she heard a sharp click, as if some one was trying to turn the handle of the glass door, that led out into a pleasure-garden, which was divided from the grounds by a thick hedge. She raised her head quickly, and looked over in the direction from whence the noise proceeded. The curtains were but partly drawn, and through the opening she could see some dark mass, like a human form, pressed against the glass. She felt a terrible inclination to scream, yet fear for the moment paralysed both movement and voice.

There was another click, and this time there was no mistaking that some one must be trying to turn the lock. Catherine's naturally fearless nature now predominated over the weakness of the first moment, and she had taken her resolution as to how she should act. She knew that beside the old butler there was only a boy in the house, and the coachman slept in the stable-loft. That dark, indistinct outline at the window could only be one of the "Blackfeet," as they were called in Ireland, from the black shirts and masks they wore, thus completely disguising both figure and features. From under her half-closed eyelids, and without moving, Catherine glanced over at Miss Maitland, who still slept on, unconscious of danger. How she prayed that she might not awaken! Then quite shutting her eyes, and breathing heavily like one in a deep sleep, she remained motionless, instinct telling her what was taking place. After a few moments of a death-like stillness, a rustling sound was heard, and then she knew that the robbers had succeeded in gaining an entrance, for the night air wafted into the apartment.

The table at which she was seated was not far from the window, and the sofa upon which Margaret Maitland reposed was close to the fire-place. Catherine heard

the stealthy tread of muffled feet come into the room; a moment later a light flashed before her closed eyelids, while the suspended breathing of some one was heard close to her face. The agony of that moment was indescribable; yet she kept perfectly still, for she felt that death was staring her in the face. The life-blood seemed to freeze in her veins, and a faintness was creeping over her, in spite of all her efforts to the contrary; when suddenly the light was withdrawn from her face, and, as she imagined, with a smothered ejaculation as of surprise, the sound of retreating footsteps assured her that she was alone.

Five minutes might have elapsed, when she took courage, and tried to rouse herself to glance round the apartment. No one was to be seen, except the sleeping form upon the sofa. Catherine stood up tremblingly at first, then finally summoning all her courage, she moved slowly and cautiously towards the door, opened it softly, and listened. Along the passage all seemed perfectly still; at the end of it was a large dining-room, seldom used by the family unless upon state occasions. Next to this was the butler's pantry, where she knew all the plate to be kept locked up in an iron safe. It was not difficult for her to imagine where they had betaken themselves. She went on tiptoe half way down the corridor, when she could distinguish voices speaking in an under-tone. Then retracing her steps towards the drawing-room, she went straight up to the window, and noiselessly drew the bolt across it. This done, she approached Miss Maitland, and, stooping over her, was satisfied that her repose was still unbroken. She once more went to the door, and opening it, stepped out, locking it after her, and then stole down the passage. As she neared the end, she perceived a door partly open, from which a light glimmered, and the whispered disputes of those within it, enabled her with greater facility to pass unobserved.

At last she reached the hall door, which she boldly

opened, and closed it softly behind her. A few seconds later she had gained the stables, and thrown the bridle over her horse's head, as she led him out.

The lawn was soon reached. When she neared the stump of a tree, she mounted on horseback without a saddle, and horse and rider soon disappeared, like the wind.

One deep breath of relief escapes Catherine as they dash on; she, bare-headed and uncloaked, exposed to the sharp air of a November night. Nevertheless, she feels nothing—sees nothing—for her thoughts are all in that drawing-room, where the pale solitary figure of Margaret Maitland reclined unconscious (oh, how she prayed she might remain so!) of her dreadful position. She knew that it would have been madness to have alarmed or roused up the small household. What could they do? how defend themselves against so many? In case Miss Maitland should awaken before her return, and find herself alone and locked in, she had torn the fly-leaf out of the book she had been reading, and written with a pencil the following words:

"Have no fears when you read this. I shall be back soon; and, above all, don't be alarmed when you find yourself locked in. I have done it.

"CATHERINE."

She placed the scrap of paper in a conspicuous place, where Miss Maitland could not fail to see it upon awaking.

On, on they flew—horse and rider—while Catherine from time to time bent caressingly over him, urging him to greater speed. The lights of the village now shone in the distance. The minutes seemed to her as years. Will they never reach their destination? Patience—a few moments more, and the animal's hoofs were clattering over the rough pavement of the long street of houses. Darting figures were seen rushing to the doors of the shebeens that were still open at that midnight hour—attracted thither by the noise made by

the horse's hoofs; and as the dim lamps shone out upon the wild pace of the horse, with its strange rider, whose white face and flowing garments were indistinctly seen as she passed, those midnight revellers crossed themselves, believing they had seen a spirit.

The last house in that straggling line was reached; over the door a lamp was burning. Catherine pulled up before it, and quickly slipped from the back of the animal, which remained at a dead stand, foaming at the mouth and steaming all over; and no wonder, for in less than twenty minutes, he had been ridden over four miles of ground. Catherine rushed into the police-station, without considering the strange appearance she presented, alone, with her dress in disorder, at that hour of the night. In a very few words she explained to the head-constable what had happened, and begged for an escort of constabulary to return with her without delay, if they wished to capture the robbers.

They lost no time in accompanying her back, and in fifty minutes from the time Catherine first started, two detachments of police halted before the lodge gate. They dismounted, and the better to avoid suspicion, divided into twos and threes. They proceeded on foot to the house, which a party of them soon surrounded, while the remainder entered noiselessly through the hall-door, that Catherine found, as she had left it, half open. When they reached the long corridor, it was quite dark and silent. They found the drawing-room door, to Catherine's great astonishment, wide open. On entering the room, what was her horror at discovering that Miss Maitland was gone! The lights were extinguished, but just sufficient fire left to enable her to distinguish the different articles of furniture. They soon procured a light, and searched the apartment through, but Miss Maitland was nowhere to be seen. The police-sergeant, who had followed Catherine, suggested that it was very possible she had gone up-stairs to her room; adding, that he would go up and ascertain, and he asked her if she her-

self would not accompany him. She acquiesced, and bade him proceed, promising to follow in a few seconds, as she wished first to try and find the piece of paper upon which she had written: this was nowhere to be found. She was just in the act of joining the police-sergeant, when, as she was leaving the room, a scarcely perceptible rustle of the window curtain caused her to turn quickly round. She looked nervously at the drapery, and saw a tall black figure, with the upper part of the face masked, come from behind the curtain. It slowly raised its arm in a threatening and impressive manner, as if commanding silence, advancing at the same time towards her.

There was scarcely any need of this precaution upon its part, for Catherine, after the recent excitement she had gone through, was incapacitated from uttering a sound. The only wonder was, that she did not fall senseless. The majestic-looking figure had now come quite close to her, while it slowly raised one hand to its face and pulled off the mask, whispering, as it did so—"Do you not know me, Catherine?—not recognise me?"

Alas! she knew him; recognised him but too well. It was her cousin, Pierce O'Neile, who now stood before her!

CHAPTER XI.

None are all evil—quickening round his heart,
One softer feeling would not yet depart.
Yes, it was love—unchangeable, unchanged,
Felt but for one from whom he never ranged.
Yes, it was *Love*—if thoughts of tenderness,
Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime;
And yet—oh, more than all!—untired by time;
Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled will,
Could render sullen were she near to smile."

BYRON.

HER cousin! and more than all, the man she loved so passionately, so devotedly, spite of all his misfortunes and failings! There he stood before her, he whom they all believed to be in another part of the world. This, then, was the manhood of the wayward, wild lad, whom no control could influence—a midnight robber! the chief of a gang whose very name produced terror! She sank upon her knees before him; then starting wildly up, ran to the window and undrew the bolt to let him pass out, when he approached her, and said softly—

"They are there, I have heard them, or I should have escaped long since. Catherine, you must hide me somewhere, and at once."

"Where, oh! where?" and she gazed around her in despair, when quick as thought, her eyes rested upon an antique cabinet that stood at the far end of the room. With a beating heart she approached it, and turning the key, that by some good fortune or fatality happened to be there, opened it. It contained three broad shelves, upon which were placed a collection of minerals, and other objects of curiosity. She could hide him there. With a sweep of the hand she drew all the articles towards her into her lap,

then took out the shelves, and placed them one upon the other at the bottom of the cabinet; and, regardless of the store set upon the contents in her lap, she threw them back again into one of the corners, in one heap. She only thought of the life that was dearer to her than all others, and that at any sacrifice an O'Neile must be saved. She made him get into the cabinet, and told him to remain quite still, till she should have an opportunity of setting him free, which must be managed somehow before daybreak. She locked him in, then handed him the key through the fretted wood-work. The cabinet not being more than four feet in height, he was obliged to take a cramped, painful sitting posture. Catherine had scarcely secreted him, when she heard footsteps returning along the passage. She threw herself into one of the arm-chairs, now fairly exhausted with bodily fatigue and mental anxiety. It was Sergeant Patricks himself who now entered, with a rather anxious look, for he had begun to wonder at Catherine's non-appearance up-stairs. Upon seeing her flushed face and feverish eyes, he exclaimed—

"Ah, I thought as much, Miss O'Neile, this hard work has been too much for you, and you appear over excited. The reaction has yet to come, and then you will suffer for your magnanimous conduct of to-night. Let me at least ease your mind upon one point, by assuring you that Miss Maitland is quite safe. Strange to say, I found her lying upon her bed, apparently more dead than alive through mere nervousness; she now desires to see you very much, and to thank you as her deliverer. She asserts that she was suddenly awakened from the deep sleep into which she had fallen, by hearing voices quite close to her. She started up, and for the moment imagined that she was under some delusion, when she observed half-a-dozen men all masked, who, without paying the slightest attention to her presence, began inspecting everything in the

room. The tallest of them, evidently the leader of the band, made a sign to the others to withdraw, and then coming up to her, addressed her with the courtesy of a gentleman, assuring her that she had nothing to fear, as he respected her too much to offer her any violence. Then, in a light playful way, he remarked that Dame Fortune had played him false, and reduced whatever worldly possessions he possessed to a very low ebb; and to such an extent that he did not think it wicked, though it might be unlawful, to take from those who could freely spare from their abundance. He begged of her, with an air more of command than entreaty, to allow him to conduct her to her room, it being the most agreeable place for her under the circumstances. He offered his arm as he spoke, yet she did not endeavour to stir, for a sickening sensation overpowered her, and she fainted. When consciousness returned, she found herself lying upon her bed; and when for a moment she opened her eyes, to her astonishment she perceived a face gazing down upon her. A remarkable one it was, too, and not altogether unfamiliar, though where and when she had last seen it, was a puzzle to her. I begged of her to give me an exact description of the face, as it might help in discovering the robber. But she could only describe that it was a very dark one, and so disguised by a thick beard, that it would be impossible to identify it again."

Catherine eagerly listened to this account, and an undefined dread crept over her, as she thought of the occupant of the cabinet.

The sergeant said that he should not think of quitting the house till the return of Mr. Maitland. He sat himself down before the fire, and took a newspaper out of his pocket, seemingly with the intention of reading it. Catherine saw there was nothing to be done but leave things to their fate; so she left the room, and went up to her friend. One comfort at least was hers,

that of knowing that Pierce had heard the whole of the conversation between her and Sergeant Patricks, and consequently would understand how matters stood.

She found Miss Maitland anxiously awaiting her. The meeting between them was very affecting; not that words took much part in it, for both felt too deep an anxiety concerning what had taken place to speak about it. There they remained, hand clasped in hand, till Miss Maitland's eyes closed; yet not in sleep, for she opened them from time to time, and fixed them upon Catherine's upturned face, as it lay against the pillow. Never had it appeared to her as it did then, in the shadow of the room; for there was a world of love, sorrow, and intelligence breathing from it, that she never saw combined in the countenance of any one before.

An hour might have passed thus, when Catherine was aroused from a fitful state between waking and sleeping, by a gentle tap upon the shoulder. She started up with an alarmed look, and recognised Edward Maitland. He put his finger to his lip in token of silence, as he pointed to the now sleeping form upon the bed, and then made a sign for her to follow him out of the room. The door had no sooner closed upon them, than he seized both her hands, while he said with emotion—

"Catherine!"—it was the first time that he had called her by that name—"words are but poor indeed to tell you how grateful I am for the great service you have rendered me to-night, even at the risk of your own life. My brave, my noble Catherine! should you ever require a friend in any need, be it great or small, though God forbid that such should ever come near you!"—this was spoken with much fervour—"I will be that friend."

Catherine was now about to speak, but he anticipated her intention.

"I know all; Sergeant Patricks has acquainted me with everything from beginning to end."

Edward Maitland was a man of few words, and concluded by saying—"May I beg of you now to seek a little repose, of which you must be sadly in want, after so many hours of fatigue and excitement. You know where to find your room? Good-night!"

He was turning away, after he had placed the candle in her unresisting hand, when, with the impulse usual to her, she said—

"I think I had better at once return to O'Neile Court. I have no fears about riding alone; and it is possible my uncle may have heard of the attack to-night, and consequently feel anxious on my account. So, perhaps, I had better go at once."

Edward Maitland did not appear particularly astonished at her resolution, for he knew that she was above the fears and nervousness of many of her sex, and with her to conceive anything was, if possible, to carry it out; yet, in this instance, he insisted upon her remaining at least till sunrise. He looked at his watch, and saw that it was close upon five o'clock; in two hours it would be daylight. Catherine trembled slightly at this announcement, for she thought of the captive who, under any circumstances, must be set free while it was dark. To avoid further loss of time she agreed to remain; and, with a "good-night," they separated.

As soon as Catherine had reached the landing-place, her foot happened to displace one of the stair-rods; she turned to replace it, when, in looking down, she found that Edward Maitland had not yet moved from the spot where she had left him. He had evidently been watching her ascend the stairs. There was something strange in his look, which, as their eyes met, struck her for the first time, and as she turned away the colour mounted into her face, without knowing why.

Upon entering her room, she ran to the window,

raised it, and, looking out, she fancied she could perceive a faint streak of light in the east, though all around was wrapped in shadowless obscurity.

For the first time that night her tears began to flow, and a feeling of hysteria came over her; she tried hard to conquer it, for she thought of what she had still to perform. As a preventive, she immersed her face in cold water, a habit she indulged in when moved by painful or violent emotion. It had the desired effect, and renewed the energy of which she was so much in need.

An hour might have passed, when she opened her door, and stole out upon the landing-place to listen if all was still; then, taking her candle, and cautiously shading it with her hand, she began to descend the stairs. She reached the drawing-room without meeting any one. After having carefully locked the door, she looked round her, then approached the cabinet, and, stooping beside it, called out at first, very softly, "Pierce," as if nervous at hearing her own voice; then louder, but still no answer. Her heart began to beat rapidly, and a strange awe crept over her. What if the recumbent position he was obliged to take, together with the pungent odour that issued from the peculiar smelling wood, might not have had some pernicious effect upon him? She had heard of such things happening. In her mind's eye she saw him lying insensible within. What should she do? how try to save him? Time was rapidly flying, and she could even now distinguish, through the window-blinds, the first light of dawn, making pale the flame of the candle. At last she ventured to put her hand through the carved interstices of the door of the cabinet, while, in her eagerness, she tore rather than pulled aside the silk lining; but it came in contact with no human form. Withdrawing it again hastily, she rushed to the table, seized the candlestick, and approached once more the object so full of terrible interest to her, and looked into the interior. To her unlooked-

for surprise, it was empty! In her amazement, the light dropped from her hand, and was extinguished in the fall. For a few moments she remained in a state of inertness and indecision, from which she was aroused by hearing some stir in the house. She ran to the window, drew up the blind, and the daylight streamed into the apartment, which, in the space of a few short hours, had been witness to so many unlooked-for events. It now presented an unusual appearance. The pretty bright carpet bore the impress of damp, disorderly feet; the different drawers and writing-tables were displaced, and their various contents scattered about. On the sofa, previously occupied by Miss Maitland, was lying the shawl that she generally wrapt about her, together with a pocket-handkerchief, crumpled up like a ball by the nervous fingers that had last held it. The still smouldering embers threw out, in the shadow of the wide fire-place, tiny sparks of light. As Catherine gazed around upon all this, it recalled to her what mental suffering she had gone through.

She hastened to rearrange everything that she had displaced in the cabinet, and, while doing so, her mind was full of conjecture as to how Pierce had contrived to effect his escape. A weight was lifted off her mind, for he was in safety, at least for the present. She returned to her room, and put on her riding-dress, then stole down the stairs, and went out the back way to the stables, accompanied by a lad whom she chanced to meet as she was crossing the yard. What was her surprise, upon entering the stall where her horse was usually placed, to find it empty! The animal was gone, although her saddle and bridle still hung in their accustomed place upon the wall. Strange that it should thus unaccountably have disappeared! There was nothing left for her but to take one of Mr. Maitland's horses, as she did not feel at all equal to walking six miles—the distance from the Falls to O'Neile Court. So she ordered the boy to saddle one for her, and bring it round

to the hall-door, while she returned to the house, in order to write a few lines, excusing the liberty she was going to take. When all was ready, she gave the note to the lad, telling him to give it to his master as soon as he should make his appearance. Then she mounted, and disappeared across the lawn, yet not before a window from above had been cautiously opened, and a man's head might have been seen protruding itself in eager haste, as if to catch the last glimpse of the retreating figure, that, too soon, was lost to his longing gaze.

CHAPTER XII.

"All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howl'd dismally round the old pile.
Over weed-cover'd fragments she fearlessly passed,
And arrived at the innermost ruin at last. . . . . .
When the sound of a voice seem'd to rise on her ear;
She paused, and she listened all eager to hear,
And her heart panted fearfully now."

SOUTHEY.

A FEW days after the events narrated in the foregoing chapter, Catherine was returning from an early morning ramble, when to her amazement what should she see, as she was crossing the field, but her missing horse, "Faughablaugh" (clear the way), quietly grazing before her. She ran up to it, and encircling the beautifully-arched neck with her arm, drew it fondly towards her. The animal recognised her in a moment, and began caressingly to rub its face against her hand, while the large intelligent eyes fixed themselves upon her, as if by their glance it wished to convey to her where it had been. She took it gently by the mane, to lead it to the stables, when her hand came in contact with a folded paper, ingeniously fastened to it by a piece of cord. She untied it, and opened it, when

the following words, written in rough pencil, but without any signature, met her eyes:—

"Catherine, *my* Catherine! you have saved my life. And perhaps, by your womanly sympathy, have done more than anything else could, to show me the folly of my present assumed position. Want of judicious affection has helped to make me the reckless being I am, but I am not so far sunken as you believe me to be. I imagined you to be like the rest, and that four years of absence would have driven my image from your heart. Thank Heaven that it is not so! Try and meet me in the Glen, to-night. It may be the last time we shall see each other for many years."

Had any one been watching Catherine as she perused the strange note, that had reached her by such extraordinary and unlooked-for means, they would have been struck by her countenance and manner. As she read the first few lines, a glow of impassioned tenderness and hope beamed in her face, and she embraced the faithful animal by her side, which might literally be said to be watching her attentively, as if understanding what was passing in her mind; then as she read on, an expression of intense pity and sorrow came over it, and almost indignation and amazement when the doubt as to her constancy was alluded to. The concluding lines startled her, and drove all colour out of her face, as she crumpled the paper in her hand, and now pressed her head against that of the horse, which remained perfectly motionless, as if in sympathy with his mistress's grief.

When Catherine joined the family at breakfast that morning, her particular attention was solicited by the O'Neile, who had, just a moment or two before her entrance, laid down the newspaper.

"Here's something for you, Kathleen, macree; I shall read it aloud, for the benefit of all:—

"'The night before last, the peaceful dwellers of the Falls were aroused and terrified by the forced entrance of a band of "Blackfeet," headed by their chief—the daring Captain Sweeny, the bare mention of whose name is enough to drive terror into the hearts of the bravest; for he has for some time eluded the officers of justice,

and that in despite of all stratagems that have been laid to capture him, and of the sum of money set upon his head. Report affirms, that he bears a charmed life. However, this time it will go hard with him, as the cavern in which he is supposed to be concealed, is watched upon all sides. We must not omit to mention the brave conduct and presence of mind evinced on that occasion by Miss Catherine O'Neile, who fortunately happened to be staying in the house at the time. How she managed, in such a short time, without any assistance to apprise the police of the affair, is a matter of wonder and admiration to all who have been made cognizant of the event.'"

The O'Neile drew a long breath as he concluded; a proud, bright look lighted up his handsome old countenance, as, turning to Catherine, he said—

"Why, Kathleen, I think that ought to sharpen your vanity a little, my girl. Come here and be kissed." He took the shining graceful head between both his broad hands and pressed it fondly to him.

"Sure it's yourself, who are the light of my eyes, and the joy of my heart! God keep you, my darling, from all harm! You are a true O'Neile, and worthy of the old stock—every inch of you!" Then a change came over his face, as he sorrowfully said—"Ah, how I wish! —but wishes are vain—that you had been born a man, instead of a poor feeble girl. If Pierce had only been true to his name!" The concluding sentence was said in an under-tone, as if to himself. "But he's gone —gone! and left his poor old father; and the once proud name of O'Neile may after all be represented by strangers, for who can tell if Otway will live to man's estate; or should he do so, what he may turn out? It is a strange world—a very strange world!"

Catherine raised herself from the kneeling position beside her uncle, and exclaimed, with a passionate outburst—"Uncle, don't say that! don't encourage such a fearful thought—don't, uncle!" And she gazed around her in a distracted manner, as she exclaimed—"What could happen to Otway? What has given rise to such an idea?" Then, as if recollecting herself, she added

more calmly, as she observed the astonishment upon every face at her strange manner and words—"Otway is a noble boy, and promises much in the future."

"So did the other at his age, and with more mental abilities than Otway can ever hope to possess. Yet what have they done for him? Better far that he should have died, than have lived to be disgraced and dishonoured."

Mary, the one of all the family who ventured the least to give an opinion, upon hearing the brother, whom she had not forgotten, and the playmate of her childhood, so harshly remembered, could not refrain from speaking, and in her timid, deferential way, said,—"Father, those are harsh words from the lips of an O'Neile—an O'Neile who should be above harbouring enmity for ever. I thought it was only the weak and cowardly who understood that." Then warming with her subject, and no longer timid, she continued—"Great souls are ever lenient, aye, and can take to their heart an offender, in consideration that he was, in an evil hour, tempted beyond his strength. To forgive is divine, for is it not one of Heaven's greatest attributes towards erring mortals? Think of that, father, and do not forget that you are an O'Neile!"

"It is because I am an O'Neile, girl, that I cannot forgive." Then in a severe tone—"Mary, I will hear no more. Let us change the subject."

Mary now felt how useless any further argument would be, so she, without another remark, continued her previous occupation, but not before meeting Catherine's glance fixed upon her with an expression of grateful admiration. She now stood up, and came over to take the hand that eagerly responded to the warm pressure, for Mary not only loved Catherine, but admired in her that strength of will and independent spirit, of which she herself was so deficient. And have we not all a proneness either to admire, or censure in others the very qualities which are wanting in ourselves?

How that long day passed for Catherine is more

easily imagined than described. Evening came at last, and, immediately after dinner, pleading a headache, she retired to her room. She collected what money she possessed, and some trinkets left her by her mother, that she thought might be useful to her cousin Pierce. It was seven o'clock when she contrived to leave the house unobserved.

The spot appointed for her meeting with him was, at least, three miles distant from the Court.

An hour's brisk walking brought her to the entrance of the Dell, that was shut in on both sides by steep hills, but which, as she proceeded, grew wider. Catherine had a habit of talking to herself, no doubt engendered by walking so much alone. To her great surprise, the first words she uttered were taken up and repeated distinctly. She stopped and listened, frightened at the dimness and solitude that reigned around, till reason came to assure her that it was but the echo of her own thoughts that had alarmed her; and the better to test it she called out—"Pierce!" which was immediately taken up and sent back to her. Yet, in spite of this certainty, she remained immoveable, not daring either to advance or retire. The hour, the place, the purpose that brought her there, now, for the first time, presented themselves more forcibly to her mind; and an undefined fear crept over her, as she stood upon the spot that was known, far and near, throughout the country, as the "Bloody Dingle," into which neither man, woman, nor child would enter after sunset. Even at noon, with life and light surrounding them, when any unforeseen circumstance obliged them to cross it, all thoughts passed from their mind at the time, but those of devotion, and of recommending their souls to God and the saints, till its melancholy view faded from their sight. The sun seldom shone upon the place, seldom softened with its magic beams the blight and sadness that hung over it.

Many years before, it was said that a fearful murder had been committed there, though the exact spot was

uncertain, there being no heap of stones to mark it. (In Ireland it is customary, upon the spot where a murder or a suicide has been perpetrated, for every one who passes by, to throw a stone.) Few, indeed, ever had occasion or fancy to approach the Dingle.

As Catherine remembered this, a shudder came over her, and she almost began to regret that she had ventured to come. With all the love she bore her cousin, and the anxiety she felt upon his account, it is doubtful whether, if at the time of her setting out she had thought of the place, she would have had the courage to do so. Now, there was no help for it—she was there, and must await the appointed hour; to retrace her steps seemed to her an utter impossibility.

The moon, that seemed to have been long struggling to force its way through the dense clouds which were wandering over it, now came out in all its beauty, lighting up the broad rugged Dell, with its patches of silvery water and enormous grey stones, that now seemed to assume all sorts of fantastic shapes in the misty light. On each side rose darkly and majestically the perpendicular slopes from which hung, in thickening downward growth, the wild mountain heath and the blackthorn, which last, by its strange form, lent a more characteristic appendage to the wild forsaken spot. And above, crowning those heights, waved the branches of the wild mountain poplar, from whose withered foliage the screeching night-owl sent forth its ominous cry, as if of despair, over the deep-shadowed, sleeping earth. The moon, just then overhead, came out from behind the clouds, revealing the unhallowed spot in all its savage grandeur and beauty, as if to compensate it, by one transient gleam at last, for the absence of the light of its more glorious rival.

To appreciate such a scene as this, one should see it lighted up by the moon, when its pale mystic spell is felt to belong to the mysteries and fascinations of the night-world.

To complete the supernatural aspect of the scene, Catherine now perceived, some few yards before her, a diminutive old woman, bent forward and leaning upon crutches. She evidently must have risen out of the ground, for the moment before she was not visible there. She wore a grey petticoat, short enough to let the bare feet below be seen; a red cloak, patched and discoloured in many places, was wrapped round her body; upon her head was tied a handkerchief, from underneath which fell, in weird-like masses, long silver hair. As she advanced, Catherine could perceive the hag-like expression of the face, if face it could be called, for there was nothing to mark it as such, except the pair of dark sinister eyes, that seemed to glow like burning coals. All form and beauty, if there had ever been any, had long quitted that face, which now appeared like one flattened mass, with here and there a protuberance to show where features had once been. She tottered up to Catherine, before the latter had recovered sufficiently from the shock caused by her unexpected appearance, and began mumbling something in old Irish. It was some time before Catherine could understand what she was saying, so inarticulate was the voice. However, upon hearing her own name, coupled with her cousin's, she was soon convinced that the old woman had been sent there by him, to ascertain if the coast were clear. This being the case, she now led the way, Catherine following her, till they came to a wretched mud hut. In one corner a bundle of straw was huddled together, upon which the sleeping form of a lad of about thirteen was stretched. In the opposite one was a heap of smouldering ashes, and above them a hole in the roof, through which the smoke passed.

The old hag, after allowing Catherine to rest awhile, now told her to accompany her to the back of the cabin. They soon came to the little cabbage garden, in the centre of which Catherine could distinguish a small

circle of mould, seemingly well tended, and enclosed by a row of sharp-pointed stones. The old woman, upon reaching it, bent over it with a sort of feverish greediness. Then, turning to Catherine, she asked her if she would not like to have a try "for nothing, in consideration of her relationship to the Captain?" Catherine, at first, not catching the meaning, asked what it was she should try. "They are mandrakes, or better known as 'earthmen.' I have collected them during many years, and now cultivate them for the wandering monks and pilgrims, who buy them from me. But, do try! the charm works best at moonlight."

Catherine kept repeating to herself the name the old hag had given them, as if trying to recall the signification attached to it. She remembered having had the properties of the strange plant explained to her. It grew deep into the earth, the roots were knotted and of a fleshy appearance, in the shape of the human form. Its odour, when strongly inhaled, caused a stupifying sensation. It was very much esteemed by the ancients, who imputed a powerful virtue to it, and attested, that when it was torn out of the earth, it gave forth unnatural and fearful sounds, which were known to affect those who heard them to such a degree that they were, for the moment, almost bereft of reason. Catherine remembered all this in a moment, but she was not aware of what the old woman now assured her—that they generally grew under the spot where murder had been committed; and by this fact she knew this must be the spot where a priest had been assassinated years before. She had found, upon digging up the earth, a root that the spade could not move, but when she put her hand to pull it up, it yielded at once to her touch, and with a noise so strange and unearthly, that it appalled even her, who was rarely terrified at anything. The next day she took it up to Mr. Maitland, of the Big House, who, upon examining it, partly explained to her its qualities, and promised to give her money for

any others she might chance to find. Her best specimens, she assured Catherine, she had collected from under the gallows of the county jail. The charm which she, with the faith of an old woman, attached to the plant was this: If a man had any one who was dear to him, threatened with danger, he was to tear one out of the ground, repeating at the same time his friend's name; then, if it gave out the usual sound, he might know that his friend was doomed; if not, that he was in no danger.

Catherine was tempted to doubt what she, in her own mind, imagined to be an old woman's dotage, but more to gratify the whims of the latter than her own belief about it, she consented, and, stooping down over the plants, she caught hold of one, and pulled it with all her strength. It yielded to her efforts, yet without any sound being heard by her. Curiosity induced her to inspect the plant, as she held it in her hand, under the rays of the moon. She was singularly struck with its resemblance to the human shape, in a distorted form, and in miniature; and so she threw it quickly from her, much to the annoyance of the old woman, who grumbled, as she carefully picked it up and folded it in a dirty handkerchief, that she slowly drew from her pocket.

Catherine, having observed how angry she had become, thought to pacify her by pulling up another, and, as she did so, pronounced a name well known to her. A sharp, moaning cry accompanied the action, such as an animal might utter when suffering intense agony. She let it go, with a cry of alarm, and jumped up, as if to run away from the ominous spot, when suddenly she remembered the purpose that had brought her, and, turning to the woman, begged her to say no more on the subject, but to take her at once to Captain Sweeny. The old hag seemed rather to enjoy the discomfiture of the young girl, grinning in a sardonic way, as she led her back again into the hut.

Arriving at the before-mentioned heap of straw, where the boy, with a pig for a companion, still lay snoring, she pushed back some of it with her stick, and knocked upon the ground three times. The earth suddenly receded, leaving an aperture large enough for a man to pass through. Catherine's curiosity prompted her to look down into it, but all was dark and still, and only the sharp raw air rising out of it, told her that it was excavated.

The old woman put a whistle to her lips, and blew a prolonged clear tone. After the space of a minute it was answered by a similar one, and soon after a light was seen approaching them, which disclosed to view a flight of steps hewn in the rocks.

The next moment a well-known voice met Catherine's ear, while a dark, handsome face was raised towards her. It was Pierce O'Neile himself, who bid her not to be alarmed, but to trust herself to him, while he assisted her to descend the uneven and slippery way. He then turned to the old woman, whom he called "granny," to say that, in all probability, the young lady would return the other way, and would therefore be able to dispense with any further service from her that night. She made a deep bob, as he addressed her, and then replaced the flag-stone, which showed no traces of having been disturbed.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh, teach me to love thee, to feel what thou art,
Till, fill'd with the one sacred image, my heart
Shall all other passions disown;
Like some pure temple that shines apart,
Reserved for thy worship alone."

"In joy and in sorrow, through praise and through blame,
Thus still let me, living and dying the same,
In thy service bloom and decay."

MOORE.

THE lantern that Pierce held in his hand shed but a dim light over their way. It appeared to Catherine that they were ascending, although almost imperceptibly, from the zig-zag path which had been so ingeniously contrived. After some time they reached a large level shelf of rock, at one end of which Catherine could distinguish, by a lamp hanging from above, a long, flat block of stone, evidently serving as a table; for around it were seated about a dozen stalwart men, or rather youths, some upon blocks of wood and others upon broken casks, drinking and chattering away, unmindful of the precarious and reckless life they were leading. Their costume, though of rather coarse materials, was still extremely picturesque. They all wore high boots, black velveteen breeches, with short jackets of the same material, confined round the waist by a broad leather belt, with innumerable bright green shamrocks interlaced all over it. From this belt was suspended a brace of pistols, inlaid with burnished steel, that flashed in the dim light. The youths were bareheaded, with long hair hanging loosely about their faces, which gave to their appearance a wildness and a stamp, characteristic of their vocation. Catherine noticed with great surprise that most of them had the aspect of gentlemen. She caught the refrain of a song that then, and many years

after, was the delight of nursery maids and the peasantry. It ran thus:—

"Oh! bold Captain Sweeny, oh!"

She shuddered as her ear caught the name in a bacchanalian song, in praise of her cousin's marauding life. Pierce marked the movement, yet said nothing, only an expression of pain passed over his face. The band, upon perceiving their captain and his fair companion, set up a loud and prolonged cheer, that vibrated and swelled through the arched vault. He waved his hand in token of acknowledgment, and then a deep silence succeeded the noisy revel of the moment before.

Pierce now drew Catherine towards the other end of the cavern, that was partly concealed by a curtain of dark baize. He drew it aside, and passed under it with her, closing it after him. Here, a lamp was also suspended from above. A large cask stood in the centre, upon which were strewn loose papers, together with pipes of various sizes and devices. In one corner was a mattress, with a large riding-cloak and a mask thrown upon it. The former he took up, and folding it into a sort of cushion, placed it in a shelving part of the rock, making Catherine sit down upon it. In a passive manner she allowed him to do so, looking around meanwhile with a bewildered air, as if she were dreaming the events of the last few days. Pierce sat down opposite to her, and waited for her to speak first. She looked at him long and fixedly, then said—

"Do you know, Pierce, that if your father had even the faintest suspicion as to your present position, I am sure it would be fatal to him. I think he entertains the secret hope that one day you will return and make all good again. You were so young and inexperienced at the time you——" She dared not say what was on her tongue, but began again—"But this humiliating, unlawful—"

He stopped her before she could finish the sentence:

"Catherine, know that neither myself nor my companions have ever taken the life of any human creature."

"But, Pierce, in self-defence you would be obliged to do so."

"Possibly, Catherine, but that would not be murder, for the law even justifies the defence of life against attack, at any cost."

"That may be, but in your position it would be murder—for you would be the aggressor, not the aggrieved,—and murder in its worst form, that no reasoning of yours could gainsay. Let me appeal to the better part of your nature, dear Pierce! Let me appeal to your integrity, your manly independence, your pride; is it right, is it worthy of you, to gain your subsistence by force and violence? I would rather beg—aye, become the poorest labourer—than pursue such a career; a disgrace to yourself, and the name you bear. In my opinion, such a course of life is, in the highest degree, cowardly, although there are many who think it very high-sounding and romantic to be the chief of a band of lawless men, and to have songs sung in their praise; but it is cowardly, because it is, at the very best, but the triumph of common, vulgar, mere animal courage, over the moral, more manly, and elevated part of our nature."

"Catherine, do you not guess what urges me to this life? It is not for myself, but for the cause of liberty and freedom. The Rebel Army, as it is designated, is sadly in want of funds to keep it afloat, notwithstanding the anonymous and liberal donations that are sent. For more than two years we have been sending supplies to them. And we, robbers as you call us, only take from those who are opposed to the independence of a free government. I never left the country, as you all imagined, but joined the volunteers in Dublin. There, unfortunately, we were one night betrayed, and delivered up to the authorities, and not all the efforts of an infuriated mob could extricate us out of their hands.

Three of my companions, poor fellows! were captured, convicted, and hanged—yes, hanged like dogs! You may well start, Catherine. I burn as I recall it now: those enthusiastic, handsome youths, with old Ireland's noblest blood flowing through their veins! I, by some miracle, escaped with my life, vowing to be revenged, and to beg, borrow, or steal the necessary means to assist this brave but unfortunate band of United Irishmen, or perish in the attempt. And know further, Catherine, that the real Captain Sweeny is now assisting the Rebel Army in Dublin. I am only personating him, the better to further the cause in his absence. So let that relieve you of some anxiety on my account."

Catherine's eyes dilated, and her cheeks flushed, during this disclosure; for she felt that had she been a man, she would have been one of those patriots, although she would have scorned to help them by the means to which Pierce had recourse. She would have shed the last drop of her blood in the cause of her unhappy country, but to no dishonourable action would she have lent herself, even to help that country. It would have been like liberating a slave, at the price of the stripes that branded him.

"Only imagine yourself, Pierce, possessing some earthly good, that was yours by every right of law and nature—for instance, a wife, a child, or it may be, a sweetheart"—she blushed as she completed the sentence—"whom you prized above all things. A robber comes into your house at midnight, when he has ascertained that its natural protectors are absent, and bears off your treasure. Tell me candidly, Pierce, the man who could act thus, would you call him honourable and brave? What he cannot have by fair means he has by foul. Shame!"

"But, Catherine, I don't rob any one of his flesh and blood."

"What is the difference, if you take what is not yours? Oh! Pierce, I beg, I implore you, if you ever

loved me—if you love me still—give up, forsake this lawless life; be anything but what you are! The world is large, and you possess youth and talents. There is an opening for you in the New World. Join the banner of liberty and independence, under which some of the noblest of your countrymen are now fighting. Oh, that my words could reach your heart, and send you this very night far away from this place! Here are the means!" And she drew from her pocket the money and trinkets that she had brought with her for the purpose.

"Leave old Ireland, Catherine!"

"Yes, leave it; and far better that it should be as it is, than that it should be still more disgraced by the unworthy conduct of any of its own sons. Oh, that an Irishman, and an O'Neile, should cause his unhappy country to blush for him! that, in addition to the wrongs and outrages at the hands of the stranger, our country should have to blush for one of its own—one who should fain have saved it! Go, and Heaven will prosper you, and your memory shall live, as it always has, in my heart for ever!"

She bent her head in her lap with excess of emotion, and a long silence ensued, which she did not dare to break. She hoped her words had made an impression, and that now the decisive moment had come.

At last he spoke. "Catherine, I feel the truth and force of your words, and if I had only my own wishes to consult, I should, as you urge, fly this night; but there are others who must be considered," and he pointed to the far end of the cave, where the murmur of cheerful voices was heard. "My brave companions! I cannot forsake them, though their services are voluntary. What would they think of this sudden freak of mine? Doubtless, I might leave without apprising them or Captain Sweeny; but, amongst all the characters I have assumed, that of traitor has never been one. No, Catherine, I cannot. Time, perhaps, may show me some way out of it, without betraying them."

"There would be no need to betray them. You could explain openly to them your intention, and then let them decide for you and for themselves. They are gentlemen, and may be more generous than you imagine; besides, their captain, as you say, will return some day, and what then?"

"I shall consider about it, Catherine, not on my own account, for all places and professions are alike to me, when I cease to be of any assistance to my suffering countrymen. Unless, indeed, I thought you would stand by me; and yet, I dare not, I cannot ask you to be my wife, for I am homeless and dishonoured; but if I had still the hope of your being mine one day, no matter how far distant, and if, above all, I had the assurance of your love——"

She interrupted him in a reproachful tone: "Pierce, can you doubt that? Have you ever doubted it? Do you not know me better? We have been children, happy, careless children, together; what brought joy to one, brought it to the other; there was no sorrow that we did not share in common. As we, in those bright days, had one joy and one sorrow between us, shall the feeling now be less, when all the joy has departed, and only the sorrow remains? Oh no, Pierce, it shall be deeper, truer, and stronger; for joy has many friends—sorrow, few. Let, then, our hearts at least be true to each other. Believe that I am the same Catherine."

He came over to her, evidently deeply moved by her words, and stretched out his arms as if to take her into his embrace; but she drew back, raising her hand, as she sadly articulated—

"No, Pierce, it cannot be. Pierce O'Neile and Captain Sweeny are one and the same person. They must be separated, sundered far as the Poles from each other, before Catherine O'Neile can, with truth and honour, say,—'Here is my hand, take me.' You know that my heart is yours, as it has ever been, and as it ever will be, no matter what happens; for hearts, alas!

are not like broken toys, exchanged or discarded at pleasure. More is not mine to bestow till Pierce O'Neile and integrity are once more united."

Then, in an impassioned manner, she continued, her hands clasped, beseechingly and appealingly to him—

"Have you forgotten what drove you from your home and friends, and helped to make you the reckless being you have now become? or do you think that I have forgotten? When I gaze upon that old man, and see how it has changed him, Pierce, and feel and know that he is deceiving himself with the secret hope that you will return one day, and with means to buy back your bartered honour, were I a man, under such circumstances, I would toil at anything, however abject, if honest, to win back what I had forfeited—aye, even though I should expire at the moment of victory; for a noble death is preferable at any time to a false, dishonoured life, Oh, think over it, Pierce!—dream over it!—live, and, if necessary, die for it, but bring it back—restore it; and that hour, I swear to you, shall see us united in outward form, as we now are, and have been, in heart."

She moved, as if to go, when Pierce, who seemed lost in thought, and deeply affected by her glowing language, was startled by her gently laying her hand upon his shoulder. He turned to her with a burning face, and said—"Catherine, I shall consider all you have been saying to me. Do you know, it would strengthen my purpose very much, if I could by some means or other obtain a glimpse of the interior of the old home, and see once more all the dear faces. Do you see any possibility of it, Catherine?"

The idea seemed new to her, yet she did not oppose it, difficult as she knew its accomplishment would be.

"Can you not smuggle me in, in some way or other, where I could see without being observed?"

"I'll consider about it, and without delay too; but at

the present moment, I must confess that I feel there is very little possibility of success."

"You possess such a clear head and such an inventive brain, Catherine, that I am confident you will discover some plan."

"In case I should do so, Pierce, how am I to let you know? I dare not venture here again; and that dreadful old hag!—what a trade she drives, Pierce, in those fearful, misshapen things, which, by her account, have some terrible, mysterious meaning attached to them, and which have impressed me with such a superstitious dread, even against my reason, which tells me they are but inanimate, vegetable matter. Do you believe in them, Pierce?"

She looked up earnestly in his face, as she put the question in a half-doubting manner, as if afraid he might answer in accordance with her fears, but he only laughed, and said—

"I don't pretend to know much about botany, cousin. All roots bear the same aspect to me. But about communicating with you, I shall soon settle that point."

He began to hoot like an owl, when, to Catherine's amazement, not to say terror, an enormous white owl perched itself upon the cask, in the midst of the papers strewn over it.

"This is my courier, is he not a splendid creature? He was brought from the North Pole, the place where only such white ones are indigenous. He is such a clever, discreet bird, and then, his ears are so peculiarly formed, he hears the slightest noise even at a great distance, and, spite of his bulk, his flight is quite noiseless. He was given me by an acquaintance, who had just returned from an Arctic expedition. I generally send him by night, when I wish to communicate with any of the country people, to whom he is well known. Shall I send it to-morrow night for your answer?"

"Pray don't, Pierce, I should never have the courage to go near him, much less to touch him. I should look upon him as some transformed spirit, destined to wander about the earth, till some vow or other connected with him should be fulfilled."

Catherine could scarcely take her eyes off the strange, ominous creature, with its wonderfully-shaped head and eyes, that seemed to penetrate her very thoughts.

"Well, Catherine, since you are so appalled at the sight of my pet, I can send you, instead, a carrier-pigeon, which has been trained by Captain Sweeny, to fly to the Court and back, and which I usually carry about with me, in case of necessity, and before sending it attach a scarlet ribbon to its neck, as a signal of distress. When the peasantry see it, they are then aware that danger threatens me, and accordingly take measures to come to the rescue. The other night I should have certainly availed myself of its intelligence, had I not recognised you, and counted upon your assistance."

"Apropos, Pierce, you have not yet told me how you contrived to effect your escape that night from the cabinet."

"Why, simply enough: I waited as patiently as my cramped position and anxiety would allow, till I felt assured that the police had left the house. Of this I was aware beyond all doubt by the return of Edward Maitland, and his long interview with Sergeant Patricks, in the very room. I heard every word, and, if I wished to excite your vanity, I could a tale unfold in your praise, that I think would astonish even you. What an immense interest Edward Maitland seems to take in you! He really became almost excited, as he listened to the Sergeant narrating the whole proceeding, and declared that you were an honour to the country. After I had assured myself of their departure, I ventured out of my lock-up, and stole noiselessly along the passage till I had gained the front entrance. Then, cautiously opening and shutting the door after me, I

went on to the stables, entered, and called your horse by name. I really imagine the intelligent brute recognised my voice, in spite of the lapse of time since he had last heard it, for he snorted in a friendly manner, and let me mount him without any trouble. And, as you tell me, no one has guessed what took him away that night."

They now arose, and began to ascend a rough path cut into the rocks. Here, a ray of moonlight fell, and the cool night air blew soft and balmy on Catherine's heated brow. But her astonishment knew no bounds, when Pierce, pulling her gently after him, stepped out of the excavated stem of an old tree that grew upon the point of the mountain. As she looked down from it, she could distinguish the mud cabin, by which she had entered, and then the open country, that spread out like a panorama before her.

"You perceive, Catherine, that should escape fail me at one outlet, I could have recourse to another. Is it not cleverly—I might say almost incomprehensibly—contrived? It must have taken years of labour to accomplish. They say that, at the time of the Reformation, many of the monks used to resort here, when they were driven from their monasteries. I have found many of their relics, and innumerable death-heads and cross-bones, that I have secreted in a cavity within. It seemed to me like desecration to have them staring us in the face, perhaps, during some of our noisy revels. Few people, if indeed any, in the present day, know of its existence, except the old woman, myself, and the Captain. Chance led to its discovery, as one day, some years back, Captain Sweeny happened to enter the cabin below in search of shelter. He chanced to let his gun fall upon the very spot by which you entered to-night. He was struck by the hollow sound it emitted, and, having obtained a pick-axe, he dug up the earth, till he came to a broad flag-stone. Upon removing it, he discovered stairs cut in the rock,

and, with the aid of a lantern, then and there found out all the intricacies of the place. Since that time it has become his stronghold. Many believe that he bears a charmed life, for often, when hotly pursued, he has suddenly disappeared, as it were, into the bowels of the earth. His pursuers often come near the spot, and some have even gone so far as to examine the very tree through which we all so mysteriously disappear; but, strange to say, it has baffled their penetration. The great secret of it is a sliding-stone, covered with sod, which, by pressing at a certain part, slides in and out. So you see it would be impossible for me to be captured; for, if one outlet failed me, I should escape by the other, aided by some one or other of the many disguises with which we are so well provided. And I defy any one, even the most scrutinising, to recognise the Captain, when disguised as a countryman or a pilgrim. He has not unfrequently imposed upon his own relations. Besides, the peasantry, who look upon him as a hero, would gladly render him all the assistance in their power."

Catherine and her companion soon arrived at the foot of the mountain. Here Pierce whistled, and, as if by magic, the ragged urchin that Catherine had left in the arms of Morpheus and with the pig, was by their side. He seemed perfectly to understand what was required of him, for he remained motionless, till he saw Catherine take leave of her companion and then proceed upon her way, when he followed her, as if by instinct.

CHAPTER XIV.

" Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash ; 'tis something, nothing,
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

SHAKESPEARE.

WE must now digress a little from the thread of our story, and devote a chapter to the explanation of the misdeed that caused Pierce O'Neile's estrangement from his home and family; a misdeed that, after its perpetration, he regretted every day of his life, and which he was led to commit, through over-enthusiasm and patriotism, when scarcely of age. A college friend, who it appears possessed an evil and powerful influence over him, worked upon his weakness, till, in an unlucky hour, he persuaded him to steal the archives of his family, in order to dispose of them for the purpose of assisting the Rebel Army.

Long and frequent were the arguments used, with eloquent appeals to his patriotism and nationality, and they ended in convincing him that all and everything should be sacrificed to his unfortunate country. Alas! he forgot that honour should be the first and one great law, the pure light which must never be shut out from our path. He yielded in a moment of temptation and weakness.

But the time came when he awoke from his delusion, and then he was horrified at the disgraceful act he had been tempted to commit. Not anything short of great crime could approach that one act of madness. Pierce O'Neile not only robbed his own generation, but the dead and the unborn, of their ancient titles and records of departed glory. In one thoughtless moment

he sold, for a paltry sum, that which had taken centuries of heroic deeds, and the stainless honour of generations, to attain—that right of the past, which was priceless, for money could not purchase it.

Pierce O'Neile never forgot that one night, so fatal to him, when he stole into his father's closet, and took from the iron safe all that remained of its former grandeur, to his family's proud name. And, as his eyes ran over the time-stained parchment, he wondered to himself what value it could possess for any one but themselves, or how his friend could be so credulous as to imagine that such was the case. Still, he had that instinctive feeling, which we all have more or less, as to right or wrong; yet the tempter triumphed, as he invariably does, whenever we allow or encourage that sentiment of the mind called doubt, to assail us. But fearful and violent hate seized him towards the tempter, whom he had once called friend, when his reason returned and upbraided him with his folly. That friend was some years older than himself, and must have been fully aware of the enormity of the deed.

But, as it afterwards appeared, he had more than a patriotic feeling to gratify, when he persuaded his companion to the step that was to ruin him; revenge—a time-strengthened and inherited revenge—prompted him.

It happened that, years before either of the young men were born, one of the O'Neiles, for some unknown reason, had grievously injured a member of this young man's family in a manner that cannot be explained here. Suffice it to say, that the family vowed to be revenged, and the father of the young man upon his dying bed, confided to his son, Pierce's friend, the manner of revenge he wished him to take. The young man but too well fulfilled the trust reposed in him, by first making his enemy his friend, in order to destroy him in his own, and public opinion.

A few days after Pierce had taken possession of the

papers, he left O'Neile Court, to return to his college in Dublin, as his friends imagined, but in reality to join the Rebel Army, which at that period of anarchy was the ambition of young Ireland. The antiquary into whose hands the archives fell, easily guessed the means through which he had come by them; and, knowing the value they were to their rightful possessor, and hoping to realise a large profit out of them, he wrote to the O'Neile, acquainting him with the means by which they had come into his possession, and his readiness to give them up at any time for a sum almost twenty times more than that paid by him for them.

How picture the O'Neile's horror and anguish when he received this cruel intelligence! At first, it is true, he was incredulous, and even laughed at the insanity, as he called it, of the man who he believed, for some motive or other, meant to trifle with his credulity. So sure was he that such was the case, that he even delayed searching for the document, the absence of which would have confirmed the truth of what his informant had stated. However, too soon for his peace of mind, the dreadful fact was revealed to him.

Catherine, then a mere girl, barely sixteen, he made his confidant. Every nook and old cupboard was turned out, before either of them would believe the truth. Then Catherine, at her uncle's suggestion, wrote to her cousin Pierce, to beg an explanation of the mystery, assuring him at the same time that neither his father nor herself would condemn him upon the affirmation of a stranger, and that he himself must be the one to assert his own innocence or condemnation, and she prayed Heaven that it might be the former!

The days that intervened before an answer to her letter could arrive, were tedious and anxious ones, although both uncle and niece strenuously and proudly banished from their minds even a suspicion of Pierce's guilt.

True, the archives were gone, yet he might have

taken them for some purpose or other that had nothing dishonourable in it; and no doubt would return them again in good time. At last the long-hoped-for answer came, when the family were all seated after dinner in the parlour, together with Father Maguire. The O'Neile put the letter into Catherine's hand, after he had glanced at the handwriting, which he recognised as his son's. Old Phil's broad face, as he presented it, expanded as usual into a pleasant grin, for he knew that it was from his young master, while he said—

"Musha, and shure an' it was only last night that I dramed of Masther Pierce, more power to him! (and by the same token, divil a wink of sleep did I get the whole live-long night) and sind him safe back agin to uz, when all his fine larning is complated!"

Then, seeing the O'Neile make a sign to him to retire, he began talking aloud to himself, with the greatest composure in the world.

"Och, bedad, an' shure it's the divarsion is wantin' at the Court, when Masther Pierce is not in it. Why, he would knock sport out of a dith's head, if there was nothing else to the fore! Then he has such a spurrit of his own, that one dursant say black's white in his presence."

There was no knowing how long this soliloquy might have lasted, or how long Phil might have chosen to linger in the apartment, under the pretence of blowing, with his great mouth the dust out of the window crevices and from the walls, thereby causing himself to sneeze repeatedly, and begging a thousand pardons at each breach of decorum, that was most ludicrous to behold. Still, in spite of all his flattering eulogiums in honour of Master Pierce's versatile abilities, which, at any other time, would have elicited a hearty laugh, he now only tried the patience of the O'Neile, who, since the arrival of his son's letter, had become nervous and anxious to hear its contents. At last he raised his hand that grasped a tumbler, and in a menacing atti-

tude, shook it at Phil, as if he intended to throw it at him. The old servant, instead of showing any resentment at the threat, turned and looked at his master with a facetious smile, and, with a respectful bow, quitted the apartment.

The door had no sooner closed upon him, than Catherine began to break the seal of the letter she still held in her hand. All colour left her face as she unfolded it, and began to read——read what?——her cousin's shame, and her own humiliation and sorrow. Father Maguire's penetrating glance soon detected that something was wrong in connection with Pierce O'Neile, and, acting upon the surmise of the moment, he put out his hand for the letter, saying, "that he had better read it himself to her uncle, if she, and the rest of the family, would leave them alone for a short time."

At this unexpected demand, Catherine hesitated a moment before complying with it, but only a moment; as she glanced from the O'Neile to the priest, she must have seen something in the countenance of the latter that made her, without any further delay, acquiesce in his request. She got up, the others following her example, and left the room.

The O'Neile, during this scene, remained quiet and expectant, with his eyes fixed upon the priest, as an obedient and passive child might do before his superior. What took place between them remained a secret to the rest of the family, but young O'Neile's name was from that hour forbidden to be mentioned by any of the household.

That night Father Maguire wrote to Pierce, to acquaint him, by his father's express determination, that henceforth his little brother would take the place which he had forfeited by his conduct; but that he should not want for means to complete his university career, and for whatever prospects he might have for establishing himself in the world; for which purposes, money would be remitted to him, at any given address, by Father Maguire.

Pierce O'Neile, knowing how useless it would be now, after Father Maguire's interference, to attempt a reconciliation with his family, accepted his fate in proud silence. But to his cousin Catherine he wrote a long, penitent, and distressing letter. She alone understood what he suffered, and she did not see, in the thoughtless act of the boy, the unprincipled action that his father and the rest of the world would condemn. She felt and suffered deeply for him, her opinion upon the subject being that he had been too harshly dealt with, although she did not openly express it. From that moment all the best sympathies of her generous and magnanimous nature flew to him, and she hoped against hope for the disowned one, who had been her playfellow and friend. She tried all her powers of pleading to soften her uncle's heart towards him. Then she turned to Father Maguire, as a last resource; but he refused to use his influence over the O'Neile, and much to Catherine's annoyance and disappointment, for she had put her last hope in him. Whether it was stern duty and conscience that forbade his interceding under such painful circumstances, or whether it was not rather a private and personal feeling which he indulged towards the young O'Neile, it is difficult to say; for Pierce, even from his earliest childhood, had never been a favourite with the priest.

The antiquary, who had purchased the records from Pierce, was so annoyed and disappointed at the family's not buying them immediately from him, that he threatened to advertise them. Whereupon, the O'Neile, rather than have the affair made public, offered the sum asked, to be paid by him in instalments, although, by so doing, he would be obliged to impoverish himself more than ever; but he would have spent his last farthing, and beggared himself and family completely, to buy them back. After a great deal of persuasion, the man at last consented to allow a certain number of years for the full payment to be made.

Up to the time when our story opens—that is, nearly four years after Pierce O'Neile had become estranged from his house,—only one-third of the sum had been paid. Catherine looked forward to the day when she would be of age, to give up most of the little fortune, left to her by her mother, in liquidation of the debt.

CHAPTER XV.

"I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,
Naething could resist my Nancy:
But to see her, was to love her;
Love but her, and love for ever."

BURNS.

ALL that night and the next day, Catherine puzzled her brain to devise some stratagem to hide Pierce, for she felt that could she succeed in doing so, it would have a great influence in deciding him to follow the course she had pointed out to him. At one time she thought of secreting him under the sofa, or behind the heavy window-curtains, where he might see and hear all that was going on; yet, on second thoughts, it might be running too great a risk, for the dog would be sure to scent him out. Then, again, she thought of his standing outside one of the windows; yet the chances were, he might be seen and recognised by the police, who were now on the look-out for Captain Sweeny. The day had nearly passed, and still Catherine had fixed upon no plan of concealment. However, as they were all at dinner that day, an idea presented itself to her, suggested, no doubt, by something upon which her eye glanced, when looking around the apartment, It was a daring, almost unprecedented plan, that she in a moment conceived, if it were only possible to carry it

out; but, with Catherine, to will was to perform. As she sat there, apparently listening to and answering the various remarks that were being made, no one, to have looked at her calm face, would have imagined what agitated thoughts were passing through her brain. An hour later she left the room, saying, "as the night was so fine and bright, she would take a stroll up and down before the house." She had scarcely reached the lawn, when, to her dismay, she perceived that she was followed by Geraldine and Lionel, who graciously proposed to accompany her,—rather an unusual thing for the first-mentioned, who seldom or ever offered to join Catherine in her rambles; and she felt assured that, in this instance, the idea was Lionel's, not her cousin's. There was nothing left for her but to acquiesce, which she did with a very bad grace, for Catherine was no dissembler. Geraldine soon complained of the freshness of the night air, which Lionel no sooner heard, than he insisted upon returning to get her an additional shawl. During his absence, Catherine thought it a good opportunity for giving Geraldine a few hints, as she could no longer conceal from herself the impression she had made upon Lionel Herbert; and, he being one of the nation to which she bore a deadly hatred, she would not have smiled upon him, nor have reciprocated his sentiments, if he could have offered her a diadem. She now believed him as false to himself as to others, for, while he flattered and pretended to love Geraldine, she, in return, believed him to be perfection, and had but too easily and foolishly placed her happiness in his keeping. Indeed, Geraldine, with the vanity of a woman who knows that she is beautiful, deceived herself into thinking that she alone was the one who had first made any sacrifice of heart, by returning an affection that she firmly and flatteringly imagined she was the first to inspire. Had not her vanity blinded her, she would have surely noticed the frequent fits of abstraction and reverie into which her supposed captured lover had

fallen of late. But, in Catherine's presence, this peculiarity was not observable, for she had only to appear or to converse, to rivet all his attention, although he seemed apparently to be either listening to, or waiting upon Geraldine. Lionel's eyes would follow Catherine's slightest action with a language in them that there was no misunderstanding; and Catherine, with a woman's quick instinct, and despite of her disinclination to do so, soon read the truth.

At times, she pitied her cousin for allowing herself to be deluded by the man, who was deceiving both her and himself. To speak truly, Lionel imagined he loved Geraldine only, but it was when Catherine was not there. Often when looking around, she would meet his glance fixed upon her; then she would turn away her head with a haughty movement, or with an inquiring, steadfast, defiant look, meet his eyes, as if to challenge and forbid the false glance, that expressed but too well the feelings which he had not strength of mind to conceal. Catherine, vexed at their now forcing their society upon her, said what in calmer moments she would not have done—

"I often think, Geraldine, what a splendid actor Mr. Herbert would make! Has it never struck you in the same way?"

"How so?" Geraldine replied, somewhat astonished at this unlooked-for remark.

"Why, any one can see that he is an adept in the art he professes."

"The art he professes! What do you mean, Catherine?"

"I mean that of the ardent young lover, who feigns a passion he does not feel, but which his profession exacts that he should get creditably through with, that is to say, with polished ease and simulation of genuineness; and a clever one he appears, for each occasion he varies his tactics. We all know that actors, while performing their part, often love the one who cannot,

or will not, respond to their addresses; and when they assume the mask at night, they fancy for the time that in reality they feel that which circumstances compel them to pretend. I trust I shall never be so short-sighted as to take the shadow for the substance."

Although Catherine had expressed herself so plainly, Geraldine did not, or would not, understand the undercurrent of her thoughts. To be jealous of the unpretending, strange Catherine, as she in her own conceit believed her to be, never once entered the mind of Geraldine; besides, she had been told that men in general were afraid of clever women, and her cousin Catherine she had flatteringly classed amongst the latter. It is quite possible that she was not very far wrong in the belief that clever women do not inspire affection, for although it may amuse men to talk with them, and sometimes listen to them, yet they seldom, when talented themselves, think of marrying a woman of "blue-stocking" reputation. A man has his own brain; what he looks for in a wife, are sympathy and companionship, and she can afford him these without being a walking cyclopædia. A woman should always be able to look up to her husband; and were it possible for their intellects to be equal, she should endeavour not to surpass his. Let her possess just sufficient knowledge to understand him, help his views when necessary, and encourage his aspirations, but let her not strive after that which does not belong to her own sphere—which should be love, endurance, and trust, three of the strongest and noblest of all household virtues, for without them a home would be desolate.

Lionel's return put an end to the conversation between the two cousins. Geraldine had penetration enough to remark that their society was disagreeable to Catherine; yet, with the waywardness that can sometimes be carried to excess, and not unfrequently against the inclination of the persons who indulge

in it, but who endeavour to console themselves for the sacrifice by inflicting it upon another, whom it gratifies them to see put out by their caprice, Geraldine, in her soft and rather affected voice, which at that moment had a slight touch of reproach in it, that she no doubt found suitable to the occasion, as it gave her the opportunity of placing herself in a favourable light before Lionel, said—

"Why, my dear Catherine, you are becoming quite a misanthrope. We have seen so little of you of late."

"You seemingly forget, Geraldine, that there are duties to perform that cannot be neglected, which, by often claiming a great deal of my attention, may make me appear what you, with your usual discrimination, observe—'misanthropical.'"

The last sentence Catherine pronounced very slowly and pointedly.

"Yes, dear, but allowing that, still one should not neglect one's own family, nor the social ties that form part of it."

"Why, Geraldine, you speak like a book, but without the moral, which I have generally understood to be the essential quality in didactic narrative. Now, supposing that you, who have so much time at your disposal, would sometimes have the goodness to double the tie which you seem so fully to comprehend and appreciate, and take my duty in my absence, you would therefore be better able to expatiate upon the subject."

"Really, Catherine, I don't understand you when you express yourself in that enigmatical way. I ask you simply, why it is that you spend so much time away from home, when you know it would be so agreeable to papa were you to sit and talk with him? You know he depends so much upon you, and you are aware that I cannot replace you—my ways and pursuits are so different from yours; beside, you are more accustomed to him, and invariably find subjects to interest him, whilst I ——"

Catherine took up the sentence, and concluded it for her—"Whilst you, being the fine lady of the family, accomplish your round of duties, which chiefly consist in dressing, admiring yourself, novel-reading, and by way of variety, occasionally flirting."

Geraldine began to simper, as if she were highly amused at the last idea, and playfully answered—

"Perhaps you would be good enough, Catherine, to give us an illustration of what your notions of flirting are. They really must be very funny. Why, I always imagined that you ignored the expression altogether."

"Having never indulged in that pastime, Geraldine, I myself may not be competent to define it, though I have observed it in others, when it appeared to me in the light of a self-deception, and rendering trivial, and even burlesque, the best and truest feelings of the heart."

Catherine now began to think how to get rid of her companions; unless by downright rudeness, she felt it would be impossible. Yet, as that was the only way, she must after all try it; still she hesitated, till they were approaching a thick shrubbery, when, watching her opportunity, at the moment that Lionel had turned to say something to her cousin, she quickly and noiselessly slipped through the bushes, and made her way as best she could through the tangled brushwood and briars that spread in luxuriant wildness around her. The young trees, planted few and far apart, permitted every now and then the moonlight to penetrate the spot. She had not advanced many steps when she heard Lionel calling after her. He was evidently in pursuit, and Geraldine after him—to judge by her wild cries and passionate appeals to him to stop. Catherine could not help being amused at the strange manner in which she had freed herself from her importunate friends, and at what would be the annoyance and disappointment of Lionel when he found that his chase

after her had been in vain. Catherine hoped that Geraldine's anger at being thus neglected, and left to take care of herself as best she could, might have a salutary effect in opening her eyes to the double game Lionel was playing.

Lionel now seemed to have gained upon her, but as Catherine stooped down behind some shrubs, he failed to see her, and passed on; however, she rose too soon, and betrayed herself by the action, for he turned quickly round upon her; she then started behind a tree that lay in shadow. As she stood there, she could hear his footsteps so near, that every minute she thought he must see her; yet as she kept turning adroitly round the thick trunk, she at last contrived to elude him, and once again darted forward for an opening that she knew led into the park. She had nearly reached it, when, to her dismay, all further progress was arrested by a ditch, about four or five feet in breadth, and full of water. She stopped abruptly a moment to consider what she should do; should she give up the chase after all, and let him catch her? No, she would not! for then it would seem as if she had, indeed, only been jesting with him. She looked back excited, and hearing the crackling noise of the brushwood, felt assured that he was fast gaining upon her, perhaps aware of the obstacle that she, in her eagerness, had forgotten, and which was now lying before her. No, she would not give up the chase, but would jump the ditch at all hazards; and, going back a few paces, the better to run at it, she darted forward, and springing lightly into the air, the next moment alighted upon the opposite side, just as her pursuer had come in sight. She remained a short time unable to move, and held on to the sloping and slippery bank, by clutching at the high, rank grass that grew upon it, while her feet were encased, as it were, in a slough of mud, from which, for the moment, all her efforts to extricate herself seemed hopeless. She sank upon both hands to support herself,

then, with a last and desperate effort, succeeded in regaining her equilibrium, but not without much detriment to her dress, which was in a sad plight with mud and slime.

By the light of the moon, she now perceived Lionel standing on the other side of the barrier between them; his dress was in disorder, and his whole appearance wild and excited, as he gasped for breath. Catherine looked at him fixedly and almost menacingly, while she in angry tones said:—

"Mr. Herbert, I forbid you, by all that you hold to be honourable and true, to urge your pursuit any further. If you possess one spark of honour, you will not jump that ditch." Then, without further appeal to him, and before he had time to recover from his amazement, she darted on her way till she arrived at the park, in sight of the house. She now experienced a feeling such as one might have after having won a hard-fought battle; and the sense of triumph was even productive of good to her, for she felt herself, during that short time, again to be the free and active being of former days; the weight of thought seemed to have passed from her heart, leaving it as light as that of a wild bird,—a feeling but too rarely experienced by the grave Catherine.

It is wonderful what a salubrious effect any violent exercise has upon the animal spirits, particularly at a time when the mind is troubled and desponding; then it is indeed a panacea, that sets all the scientific recipes of the faculty at nought, for it acts upon the body as a thunder-storm does upon the atmosphere, which before was close and suffocating.

Catherine stood still, and looked around cautiously, before putting to her lips the whistle that Pierce had given her. Having done so, she waited anxiously some time, till at last she heard a flutter above her head, and the next moment the pigeon alighted at her feet. She took it up gently, and caressed it, before

attaching to its wing the piece of paper, containing the few words she had written to Pierce, telling him to come to the Court the next morning before daylight, as she had found a place in which she could secrete him. After which she took the sagacious little creature in both hands, and threw it into the air in the direction it was to go.

That evening, when the family were assembled as usual before separating for the night, Geraldine was sulky and rude, and would not listen when Catherine addressed her. Even Lionel was more dignified and reserved, while Catherine, on the contrary, was animated and good-humoured. In the course of conversation, she related to her uncle the chase she had unintentionally been the cause of giving Mr. Herbert. She explained that she wished to ramble about alone, and that in order to get rid of her companions, availed herself of the first opportunity by running away.

Lionel spoke in an injured and haughty tone—"Miss O'Neile had only to express her wishes on that subject, and there would have been no need for her to take so much trouble to disencumber herself of Geraldine and myself."

"Yes, I think it was extremely rude of you, Catherine. I had to be left alone, while Mr. Herbert was obliged to run after you. One would really imagine that you had done it for the purpose, knowing that he was bound in common politeness to follow you, and ascertain where you were going alone, at that hour of the night."

"Yet he failed, Geraldine, in his good intention. Are you aware that I never allow any one to catch me, when I don't mean to be caught?"

The O'Neile laughed heartily at the whole affair, remarking that Catherine had her crotchets as well as other people, but that, upon the whole, she was a good girl, and he did not see why she should not walk alone, if it was her pleasure to do so.

"Then why did not she say so at once?" was uttered by Geraldine, in an aggravated tone.

"Why, I suppose she left that to your good sense to find out, my girl."

CHAPTER XVI.

"A change came o'er the spirit of my dream,
The Wanderer was returned. . . .
And all things reeled around him; he could see—
But the old mansion, and the accustomed hall,
And the remembered chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade;
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny." . . .

BYRON.

THAT night, long after the family had all gone to bed, Catherine might have been seen entering the parlour, and cautiously locking the door after her. She remained some hours there; and had any one listened attentively at the door, they would have heard the raising and putting down of a window, and afterwards the moving about of heavy articles of furniture. It was daylight as she came out again, with a flushed face and flurried manner, that also might have been observable during breakfast, had any present thought of remarking it. Company was expected that day to dinner, consisting of all the gentlemen residing in the neighbourhood.

The old-fashioned apartment really had an air of comfort about it, not to say of romance and faded splendour; while in the enormous fire-place a great blazing fire now crackled and flamed, revealing the long line of full-length portraits of a past generation of O'Neiles. Some were hanging in massive gilt frames, while others were totally denuded of that

ornament. They seemed now, in the glowing blaze, to look down benignly upon the scene of their former existence. During the time that intervened before dinner, the guests amused themselves by discussing various topics, and commenting upon one subject or another, not forgetting the robbers' attack up at the Falls, some weeks ago, when all eyes were turned upon Catherine; and Edward Maitland, who was present, said he had ascertained that the chief of the band was well known in the neighbourhood by the peasantry, but that it was almost hopeless to try to obtain any information from them upon the point, as they would rather give themselves up to justice than betray Captain Sweeny. The only hope that remained was the temptation of a large reward, and a double reinforcement of police, which was now being established throughout the district. Mr. Maitland added that many people suspected he was hiding in the Glen, where search had been made, but without success; the only human habitation in it being that of a half-witted old hag, living in a wretched hovel with her grandson, who it appeared was also but one remove from an idiot.

Before proceeding further, we will give some slight description of the state of the culinary department at O'Neile Court, while the hungry guests are patiently waiting for dinner to be served. It was long past the hour appointed for that feast of reason; however, punctuality was not the order of things in general, owing to a slight accident that had been known to happen more than once before at O'Neile Court, and upon a similar occasion too.

The cloth was laid as usual by old Phil, the butler, upon which a goodly array of old plate and cut-glass was spread—odd remnants of former splendour (for no two tumblers or forks were of like pattern), which, by its suggestiveness, prepared the appetite for the good fare to come. The half-hour struck from the

old clock in the corner, yet no sign of dinner; still the company talked on, as if accustomed to the caprice, till eight o'clock sounded, when Catherine was slily beckoned out of the room by Phil, who for the last ten minutes had vainly been attempting to attract her attention. The O'Neile himself now began to show signs of uneasiness, by getting up and sitting down incessantly; then he would look furtively at his great silver watch, as if unwilling to call the attention of his guests to the fact that was tormenting him; or, if by chance he was detected in the inquiring act, he would immediately give utterance to some joke or other, to avoid the proximity of the subject so interesting to all awaiting the attack in prospect. Then, watching his opportunity, when they were all intent upon a new topic, he made signs to Otway to approach, and whispered something in his ear, that sent the latter flying out of the room. He returned in a short time, and with all the innocence in the world, forgetting who were present, bawled out—

"Why, daddy dear, they only twisted the heads of the geese a few moments ago, because that stupid Martin forgot to go down to the pond to fetch them in time. But never mind, dad,"—observing the blank expression of his father's face,—"they are roasting away now at the fire, and Biddy says they will be ready in a jiffy."

The boy had scarcely finished speaking, when his father tried to drown his voice by repeating aloud—"Silence! sit down, Sir. Don't you see there are strangers here?"

Half-an-hour later, Phil made his appearance, in answer to the oft-repeated pulls at the bell, which his master, in his eagerness, had now fairly torn down.

"D—— it, Phil! what are they all doing with the dinner to-day?"

"Shure, naughting at all, yer honor; and it's all

through Tim Cody, the butcher, who, bad manners to him! saving yer presence, sowld every scrap of mate when we sint for the leg of mutton. But sooner than disappoint yer honor, Sir, shure he's gone and kilt a whole sheep, and was quartering it, and that's what kept them; but it's now in the pot wid the turnips, and it's meself will bring it in, when it's ready, in less time than you can say 'Jack Robinson.'" And as he looked round the room—"Faix, the company don't seem to want it at all, to judge by their divarting talk anyhow."

"Want it! then what the deuce have they come here for?"

"Shure enough, and for the dinner, Sir, that they know will be to the fore, if they have to wait till to-morrow morning for that same, shure it will be dinner all the same."

"Where is Miss Catherine? send her in at once!"

"Now, yer honor must excuse her. Shure a little misfortune has happened to the cook, and Miss Catherine, like a rale lady as she is every inch of her, is trying to comfort the poor thing, though that's neither here nor there, for I am afraid it won't mend matters, more's the pity for that same! Why, it would knock tears out of a stone to see how she is taking on."

"Speak out plainly, man, what is the matter? Am I not to know what is going on in my own house? Zounds, man, speak out! They have not forgotten to make the pudding?"

"Shure, an' that's it, yer honor has hit the nail on the right head. Poor Biddy, when she put the cloth round it, lost her head a little bit, and forgot to tie it up, and when she was insinavating it out of the pot, it all fell to shmithereens; and there it lies in the scalding water, and looks for all the world like an illigant turtle soup, Sir."

"Turtle soup be hanged, and you along with it!" And the O'Neile, no longer able to control himself,

and forgetting those present, began swearing by Saint Patrick, that there was never such a set of blockheads as those servants of his.

Then, turning in an excited manner towards his guests, and addressing himself in particular to his nephew, to whom the scene was quite new, he launched forth in a pompous and injured tone to the following effect—

"Now, gentlemen, what do you say to all this? Is it to be credited? My house provides every necessary, for myself, family, and guests. In the kitchen they have only to express their wants to have them gratified. I kill my own beef and mutton, Sir"—as if challenging Lionel, or defying him to contradict the assertion,—"in short, provide everything beforehand, so that nothing shall be wanting; and now, I and my honoured guests are kept waiting, through the caprices of an idle set of servants, who, by-the-bye, are too well paid and fed to understand their duties. Never pamper your servants, Sir, never do so! take my word for it, or you'll regret it, as I do now."

In his excitement, he began to walk up and down the apartment, with his hands behind his back, kicking right and left before him everything that had the misfortune to be in his way.

"But I will shut up the house altogether, and go away to Dublin; then the rascals here may get on as best they can. I declare to goodness I mean it, 'pon my life I do!"

This was said at the old butler, who was standing, door in hand, with his mouth half open with astonishment at his master's intended resolution of leaving O'Neile Court. True, he had often heard him threaten to do the same thing before, yet without carrying the threat into execution; still, he thought to himself, that there was no knowing but that he might at last act up to it, and then, what would become of them all without the master? To Lionel, all this show-off was truth,

but the others understood better; for Father Maguire came up, and putting his arm within that of the O'Neile, said—

"Never mind, O'Neile, it is only part of the old story, you know. We can wait, and it won't be the first time either. Only I suppose that gentleman there," addressing himself to Lionel, "is not accustomed to the aristocratic hours for dining, which have descended to us from our ancestors; but we must keep up the old customs, or it's turning they would be in their graves."

Phil, who during this address, stood in an artistic attitude of indecision, upon hearing the conclusion of the priest's sentence, ran his eyes along the wall from which the family portraits were suspended, as if he really expected them all to walk out of their frames, while at the same time he slowly and reverently crossed himself.

Father Maguire had scarcely concluded, when all at once it occurred to the O'Neile that the supply of whiskey in the house was rather limited. Phil was again summoned to undergo a cross-examination. He no sooner made his appearance, than he was accosted by his master, at first in a somewhat suppressed voice, which grew louder when he ascertained that in this department there was also a screw loose.

"Has the potheen been fetched?"

"Shure yer honor, an' it's meself saw the smoke coming out of the mountain last night, yet divil a taste have I seen of the liquor, though I sint one of the boys fur that same; when the cratur came running back wid the breath all blown out of his body wid fright, fur shure he smelt that dirty blackguard Cuddy, the gauger, bad luck to him!"

"Cuddy, the gauger! So the rascal is down here again! Why, it's scarcely a week since he last paid us a visit, when I believe he had a hard run for his life, with all the boys in the parish after him."

"Faix, yer honor, Sir, meself can't fur the life of me put it together how any dacent mother's son can sarve his time to being a dirty, spying exciseman. Shure he's a cipher! I'd rather be anything than that, an' that's but little, anyhow, in the carrying line. Naughting to naughting and naughting remains, an' that's just what a gauger is, an' more's the pity for the race of Adam, our ligitimate parint, when we can't find a better!"

"Hold your tongue, and don't keep jabbering there for ever! Here's a pretty kettle of fish, only a drop of whiskey in the house!"

"Shure, that's the large dhrap, anyhow, yer honor; bedad, an' there's a gallon of that same, that we can multiply by wathering. An' shure, it's all the holier it will be for a little christ'ning, an' will prove to the quality that we are not haythens, whatever else we may be."

"Well, whatever you do, be quick about it, and—Phil, don't drown the miller in your zeal,"—then, in a whisper,—"or Father Maguire will find it out; he has the sharpest palate in the four provinces, and would never forgive our imposing upon him in this dirty way. I am ashamed of myself to be obliged to do it."

"Begorra, yer honor, shure the limons an' sugar will make up for the deficiency in potheen, an' it's sweet an' sour it will be, anyhow, an' that same is a comfort; so don't be afther breaking yer heart over it, Sir."

At last the long-expected dinner made its appearance, and every one present sat down to enjoy it, forgetting that they had been kept waiting so many hours.

At dessert, Otway was allowed to make one of the party (he never dined with the family when there was company at the Court), and was treated with great familiarity by the gentlemen, with whom he was an especial favourite, some of them taking him upon their knees, and indulging him with frequent sips of their hot

punch, that he took with one or two grimaces, which he vainly endeavoured to hide. He was called upon for a song, and began at once, with a tolerable share of confidence, the famous—

> "In the year ninety-eight, when troubles were great,
> 'Twas treason to be a Milesian."

While singing it he did not forget to cast a sly glance over at his cousin Lionel, to watch its effect upon him. Otway sang with great point and spirit for so young a boy, and was applauded at the conclusion of it; the O'Neile gazing at him with tears in his eyes, and, no doubt, thinking of that other son, who had fled his home, and whom he now believed to be a wanderer, far from his native land.

Otway bore a strong resemblance to his brother Pierce. One of the gentlemen, after having looked at him a long time, impulsively remarked—

"What an extraordinary likeness he bears to his brother! Don't you agree with me?" appealing to some one near him, who replied—

"Yes, the resemblance is certainly very strong; still I find that between Pierce O'Neile and his grandfather, whose portrait hangs over there, the likeness is much more remarkable." As he spoke, he pointed in the direction indicated.

The gentleman appealed to now stood up, and walking slowly over, looked at the full-length picture hanging high upon the wall. He remained silently gazing upon it, as if fascinated. Presently he was joined by another gentleman, who, after looking at it a long time, asked his companion what he thought of it, observing that being a little short-sighted, he could not see clearly without a light. On hearing the remark, Otway, with a boy's alacrity, seized a candlestick, and was hastening over with it, when Catherine arose, and intercepting him, said—"Give me the light, you are too small to hold it properly."

The boy remonstrated, pleading that he could stand upon a chair; but Catherine, to his great disappointment, would not allow him to do so. Otway muttered something about her being very disagreeable, and always ready when she was not wanted; and then walked away sulkily to the other end of the apartment, where he soon forgot his slighted feelings in playing with his friend, the large dog.

Catherine, in the meantime, went over to where the gentlemen were standing before the picture, and held up the candle, but in anything but a good light; somehow or other she did not, or would not, understand the proper way to hold it, but moved it from side to side in rather a fidgety manner. Indeed, had any one looked at her face at that moment, they would have been struck by its unearthly pallor, and the wild expression of the large dark eyes; yet the hand which held the candle was quite steady, and the calm, clear voice did not betray the least nervousness.

Only she herself and one other knew the dreadful ordeal she was undergoing, at the time that those two were inspecting the portrait. Whatever their opinion of it might have been, they did not, singular to say, give vent to it in words, but returned to their seats with a thoughtful and puzzled expression of face.

Lionel, at Geraldine's request, stood up, and went over to look at the picture too. He was a great connoisseur in art, and had, during his travels in Italy, seen good originals.

"How very strange! I never in my life saw so much expression in a painting. Why, one could almost fancy it had life in it. How wonderful! how beautiful! He who painted it was indeed an artist!"

And, in truth, the portrait looked as fresh, and the colours as bright, as if it had been painted only a short time before. The dark limpid eyes, as they looked out from the canvas, seemed to have soul in them, and the full, red lips, slightly parted, gave one

the idea of breathing mortality. Lionel appeared spell-bound, and begged of Catherine to give him the candle into his own hand. She was complying with the request, when it fell with a dull, heavy sound on the oaken floor, and was extinguished. Before Lionel could prevent her, she stooped quickly to pick it up, greasing her dress as she did so, in a rather unnecessary manner. For the moment the picture was forgotten, and Catherine left the room, taking with her the candle, which was broken by the fall. However, Otway procured another light for Lionel, who once more was attracted by the fascinating picture, but it appeared that this time he could not find a favourable position for looking at it.

"Well, that is certainly most extraordinary! I can scarcely believe in such a self-deception, if I may give it that appellation; for I am almost certain that the expression has changed since I looked at it ten minutes ago."

As Lionel was giving vent to his surprise, Catherine entered the room unobserved, and going over to a small table opposite the picture, took up a book and pretended to be occupied with its contents, though in reality her eyes were fixed upon the portrait. The aspect of her countenance had changed: it was less pallid, and the eyes had resumed their usual softness.

Lionel now turned to address the two gentlemen who had first looked at the portrait.

"Will you do me the favour, gentlemen, to come here a moment, and tell me if you find that I am wrong in my opinion. It is quite possible that I may see it in a different light to what you do."

One of the gentlemen appealed to was Edward Maitland, of the Falls, who, at the moment that Lionel addressed them, was earnestly engaged in talking to his companion upon some topic or other. He looked at Lionel with a slight inclination, as if about to comply with his request, when his attention was unexpectedly

attracted by Catherine's letting the book fall which she held in her hand. There was an expression in her face, a peculiarity in her manner, that, although she never turned towards him, induced Edward Maitland to think she discountenanced his intention, as she rather ironically said—

"Why, it appears that Mr. Herbert possesses a varying, not to say a capricious imagination; to fancy that a family portrait, like the slides of a magic lantern, can reflect new faces and expressions. That's a new discovery in the art, of which I was, till now, ignorant;" and carelessly taking the candle out of his trembling hand, she looked long and earnestly at the picture, and said—

"I, for one, can see no change in it from what it has ever been, perhaps, because I look at it so seldom; for it too vividly recalls the remembrance of one, who, though alive, is still dead to those who love him best." Heedless of all assembled in the apartment, and even of Lionel, who listened to her words with trembling lips and blanched face, she continued—

"Oh, Pierce O'Neile! if you could return to the home, to the land, which by right should be yours, with the heart and hopes of your childhood, all might yet be well!"

A breathless silence had fallen upon all, as Catherine, with a voice whose pathos was almost electrifying, thus apostrophised the image in her heart, while gazing upon its likeness above her. The romance and solemnity of the scene were enhanced by the soft flowing prelude that Geraldine's fingers evoked, as they now wandered carelessly over the strings of the harp, as if it were a plaintive death-song of lament for the lost one.

The O'Neile appeared unusually agitated, and then got up quietly, and stole over near to where Catherine was standing, as if he would bring back the memory of the past by the soft influence of her language; the

music, the meantime, striking a tender chord in his heart for the one whom he had disowned.

Catherine thought now, or never, was the moment to touch the half-relenting father's heart, and, if possible, to make him promise to forgive the son, whom, despite of his disobedience, she knew he still loved, although his pride and stern feelings of justice were as strong as ever. She approached her uncle, and gently laying her hands upon his shoulder, thus eloquently appealed to him—

"Uncle! dear old uncle! say that you forgive—that you will receive once more to your affection Pierce O'Neile! Four years—oh, think what long ones they must have been to him!—have passed since that fatal night when he fled this roof. Say—promise—that he may come back to you—your son, Pierce, your firstborn, in whom you lived again. If he can bring back with him proof of his atonement and amendment, with a true regret for the past, and a name that in other lands has won praise and honour by noble deeds and brave conduct; oh! say you will forgive him, and that he may be told so. That hope will bring him to us again, and will follow him amid the lonely night-watches on the field of battle, as, far from kindred and country, he dreams of the blessings of home, that were once his. Years may pass away before he returns to his native land—returns, with the blight of the past effaced from his name and mind. In memory of his youth, his temptation, and the mother who loved him so well, and who, happily, never knew her son's disgrace——"

"Catherine! no more! I have listened too long." He turned away; and the sad, touching look that her words had had the power to call forth, now gave place to a severe expression at the mention of his dead wife's name.

Catherine remarked it, and regretted too late her imprudence; but making one more effort, she said, caressingly—

"Then, for my sake, uncle—since you compel me to utter it—say now before all these gentlemen" (she looked around at them as they stood in the back-ground, but did not notice that Edward Maitland had left the room unobserved, followed by the old butler, who had come and whispered something in his ear, just as Catherine had begun to address her uncle) "to whom his life has been no secret, that you promise to forget and forgive the past."

There was a struggle between affection and injured honour in the heart of the O'Neile. Need we say that the first won the victory; for time is a great healer of wrongs and disappointments.

"For your sake I would do much, my own true, noble-hearted Catherine. So let it be as you will."

Catherine could not speak, her heart was too full for utterance; she only fell upon his neck, and there hid her emotion.

The remarkable picture, which attracted so much attention, had also made an extraordinary impression upon the little boy Otway. After having gazed at it a long time, he ran up to his father, and burying his face in his lap, murmured—

"Daddy, dear; the picture frightens me to-night. I won't look at it again."

Then raising his head timidly, he looked towards where it hung; and as if, in spite of himself, he was attracted by it, he advanced a few steps in its direction, and then retreated to his father's side, who, catching him by the arm, said, "My boy, why do you make so much about it? it's all nonsense."

"No, indeed, dad, I am no longer terrified, and you shall see how I will look at it;" and rushing over impetuously he jumped upon a chair the better to see it.

Geraldine was rather annoyed at his conduct, and exclaimed—"How ridiculously affected that child is to-night! Just because everyone else is fussing over

grandfather's portrait, he imagines that he must do the same. I am sure he never took the trouble of doing so before."

The fact was, the fair Geraldine was vexed at Lionel's having deserted her so long for the sake of criticising an old family picture that had hung upon the wall for the last fifty years. She, however, was determined not to go near it; but, to show her utter indifference to such folly, as she, in her superior wisdom, considered it to be, continued playing her harp as if unconscious of what was going on around her, and wearing one of her angelic smiles, when, in reality, she was in anything but an angelic humour.

Otway, unheedful of her admonition, was still staring at the picture, when Catherine approaching him, told him he must get off the chair, and that to-morrow he could look at it as long as he pleased. At her request he left it lingeringly and regretfully, saying to himself—"To-morrow it will not be the same to me as it is to-night, and as it never has been before; but I shall never forget it!"

Catherine alone, of all in the room, heard the boy's strangely-uttered thoughts, which induced her to look more searchingly into his face, not without a vague foreboding of evil; his large eyes had a far-off expression, as if their depths saw beyond the realities of all that at that moment surrounded him; and Catherine remembered this long afterwards. True, she had often observed the same look in them before, yet was never so impressed by it as now, for the reason that the moment after, they would be dancing with fun and mischief, which would make her forget that they had ever looked sad; but now the melancholy light remained.

Father Maguire's curiosity was also awakened, and he went over in order to pass his opinion upon the portrait. Catherine, as she observed his movements, now, for the first time, lost her presence of mind, and

the same expression of uneasiness came upon her face, that sometime before had overshadowed it. The priest now stood beneath the picture, and was in the act of raising the light that he held in his hand, when a portrait hanging next to it suddenly fell at his feet with a crash that caused them all, simultaneously, to start back with a cry of alarm. The picture which had attracted such general attention was at that moment completely forgotten, though it still hung beside the spot whence the other had just fallen. Old Phil, and several of the domestics, ran in with open mouths and staring eyes, as if the old castle were tumbling about them, and all of them set up a hullaballoo, even before they knew what had happened. The O'Neile, irritated beyond his self-control by the confusion of tongues, told them all, in as stentorian a voice as he could command, "to cease their babble, or go drown themselves in the horse-pond." Silence fell upon them all at this command, Phil being the first to break the ominous quiet as his horrified look recognised in the fallen picture, the "Black Chieftain," as he was designated, whose antecedents were known far and near. Report said that he had perpetrated some atrocious crime, which was afterwards followed by such remorse, that he was supposed to have put an end to his existence. Yet, singularly enough, his body had never been found, though search had been made for it during many years.

Phil, with trembling voice and portentous looks, now asserted "that it had tumbled down once before within his remembrance, many years ago; and that it was a short time before Master Terence (the O'Neile's uncle) had fallen from his horse, a dead man. May the heavens be his bed this night!" The old fellow having got into one of his talkative moods, now fairly forgot his fright in his loquacity; and those collected around him, led away by their curiosity, forgot theirs too, in listening to him.

"Shure, it's meself remembers, as if it were but

yesterday. I was but a gossoon—just a taste bigger nor Masther Otway there—God bless the mark. Well, I was helpin' to wash-up in the pantry for that same day, above all others in the year, and there are three hundred and sixty-five in that same." (He began counting upon his fingers.) "There was a power of quality here at the Court; some of them just looking like what one sees on cards and picters—dressed out from top to toe, fur all the world as if they were living in the Garden of Aden, before the sarpint put his ug y tail into it; bad luck to him, anyhow, the omadhawn!"

The picture was now raised, and placed against the wall for the present, Phil promising to have some of the boys the next morning to help put it up; after which, he and his followers made their exit.

The O'Neile and his guests sat down, and talked in whispers about the accident. Some of them were relating strange things that they had heard about the mysterious Black Chieftain of unhappy memory, when Otway came rushing in to announce that old Michael Phelan, the blind piper, had arrived, and that all the peasantry about the neighbourhood were dancing away, and calling for "Long life and prosperity to the Masther."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Where is my cabin-door, fast by the wild wood?
Sisters and sire! did ye weep for its fall?
Where is the mother that look'd on my childhood?
And where is the bosom-friend, dearer than all?
Land of my forefathers! Erin go bragh!
Buried and cold, when my heart stills her motion,
Green be thy fields, sweetest isle of the ocean!
And thy harp-striking bards sing aloud with devotion—
Erin mavourneen—Erin go bragh!"

CAMPBELL.

THE O'Neile now proposed to his guests, as was usual in Ireland, that they should adjourn to the large kitchen before breaking up, as it was famous sport to see them capering about, without a thought of anything else in the world. Then, turning to his nephew —"Come, Lionel, you must join us; it will give you some insight into Irish character, which is not to be met with every day, my boy."

Lionel did not seem much inclined to accept the proposal. To his fastidious English notions he had seen quite enough of the "eccentricities" of the country, as he chose to call them.

Geraldine suggested that she was sure he would only be bored with such a wild performance; adding, that perhaps, he would prefer listening to her singing.

"Singing be fiddled! Why, he does nothing else but listen to your singing."

The blood of the O'Neile was up at the indifference manifested by his kinsman for the sports and diversions of the country; in fact, he took it as a slight both to himself and the people.

When Lionel, with his usual tact, saw the turn affairs were taking, he changed his plan, to the no small annoyance of Geraldine, and took hold of his little cousin's hand to leave the room. Otway, during the

colloquy, was anxiously awaiting the issue of things, which now seemed to accord with his wishes. A glad smile lit up his face; he began jumping and pulling Lionel's arm, from mere animal spirits; then, turning to his sister, with a mocking laugh, said—

"Ha! ha! Miss Geraldine, you are not going to have it all your own way this time. You can stay here, and sing yourself hoarse till we come back."

Then, in a low, would-be earnest voice—

"And take care that the big ghost from the tower does not come down and pay you a visit while we are away."

The impudent boy would have continued teasing her, despite Lionel's efforts to silence him, had not the fair Geraldine, aggravated beyond control by her brother's taunts, run after him, and with her own soft hand begun to pull his ears—an old trick of hers—forgetting, for the moment, her assumed character of gentleness and dignity; and this to Lionel's great astonishment, who imagined that she could not injure a fly, and always looked upon her as too delicate and lovely to be lost amid the wilds of Ireland.

She was not even content with pulling and pinching his ears, but went so far as to slap her beloved brother. Hers was a nature very slowly aroused to anger, but once excited it knew no bounds. Her father had to interfere and separate them. She almost cried with rage and shame; when the O'Neile, leading her into the room, turned the key upon her, saying he would release her when she had become reasonable.

He did not seem the least ruffled by the scene, but treated it as if it were a daily occurrence, and even smiled as he went away.

But Lionel Herbert was shocked and pained more than he could express, particularly as he happened to be the principal cause. He followed the rest of the party in a mechanical way, still holding Otway by the hand, when the latter, with a child's quick instinct,

observed the expression of his face, and tried to set him more at his ease by saying—

"Cousin Lionel, you must not mind papa's having locked up Geraldine; he always does so when she loses her temper, and it is the only way to punish her; she will soon forget it—she is so accustomed to it."

The last sentence was uttered by Otway as if it were a matter of course.

Lionel thought, although he did not say so, that it was rather a derogatory style of punishment to inflict upon a youg lady of seventeen. He was very sensitive where women were concerned, and felt that this was a degradation that might have been spared her. He begged the O'Neile to return and set her free from such a puerile punishment; but to all his entreaties his uncle only rubbed his hands, as he good-humouredly said—

"My dear boy, I assure you that she will not be losing her time; and Father Maguire will thank me for it, anyhow, for it will give her time to say her prayers undisturbed too, which she cannot do at all times. He complains to me that, instead of her repeating her litany twelve times every morning and night, she has other ideas in her head. No, no, my boy; be assured it will not do her any harm. Now, with Catherine, I could not do such a thing—it would send her right out of her mind; she has too much soul, and Geraldine too little, although I say it myself of my own child. But we all know where the shoe pinches most."

They had now arrived at the kitchen-door, when a novel scene presented itself to Lionel Herbert. There, sitting, laughing, and lounging against the walls of the immense kitchen, were to be seen men, women, girls, and boys of various ages; the latter remarkable for the tattered state of their garments (if they might with truth be so designated), which could scarcely have been intended for the forms that they helped so grotesquely to decorate, it would be erroneous to say cover, as stray knees and elbows peeped out in

every direction. Indeed, one or two of the great-coats, which were minus a sleeve or a tail, might have originally been intended to fit a man of well-nigh giant proportions, instead of a boy, if one were to judge from the bulk and weight of them, as they were swathed round the bodies of the urchins, whom they fairly seemed to extinguish, except at the salient points before-mentioned. Others were even more ethereally clad, with one leg breeched and the other bare; while an old-fashioned waistcoat, which, from its ample dimensions, might have once decorated a member of the Beef Eaters' Society, helped to hide the deficiency of the nether garment. The girls were more materially covered, but with exceedingly short petticoats, which left to view a well-turned leg and ankle.

The old blind piper sat in his accustomed place near the fire, which was cheerfully blazing away. Suspended above it was a large three-legged pot, filled with potatoes and the supper that was to regale them all after their fatigues.

Michael Phelan was a true specimen of the Irish piper of that day. He was decently and warmly clad, with a long blue frieze coat, corduroy breeches, and dark grey stockings reaching to the knee. On his head he wore a cap, that he was never seen to take off either in or out of doors. The general supposition was, that he slept in it; and truth compels us to say that it looked greasy enough for such a suspicion. He was smoking away at his cutty, or short clay pipe, which did not incommode him in the least from blowing his bagpipes. He had no pretension to good looks, being deeply pitted with the small-pox, which, at that period, raged all over the country; his little grey eyes, rendered doubly small by the insidious disease that had so disfigured him, looked out vacantly from beneath the overhanging bushy brows. Michael, having the misfortune to be born blind, or, as his relations more poetically said, "the darkness of this world for the

light of the other," was from his cradle destined to become a votarist of Euterpe. Michael was a retailer of all sorts of gossip, that he picked up in his perambulations from estate to estate, and was, in extreme cases, a kind of lawgiver, and an eloquent politician. He usually spoke in an under-tone, with the self-consciousness of riveting the attention of his hearers; and was always accompanied by a lad of about twelve or thirteen years of age—a rather fresh-looking, good-humoured fellow, who was an adept in various sorts of intricate steps and turns in the dance. He was now figuring away upon a large door, that had been taken down and placed in the centre of the kitchen. As he went through a capering jig, he was cheered and encouraged by the delighted faces which had, for the last half-hour, surrounded him. In Ireland it is considered a great proof of excelling in the Terpsichorean art, to keep dancing away as long as your breath will hold out; during which feat all sorts of random compliments are thrown at the champion, such as—"Never say die, you spalpeen!" "Shure, an' it's yerself will dance a hole in the dur if you only keep it up, anyhow." "Arrah, can't you be afther letting the cratur alone? Shure, a straw would knock him down now." "Faix, I will be up wid him; tho' to look at him one would swear he was trying to browbate me, bad manners to him! He thinks he has me at a nonplush; but aisy, I'll shame him yet."

This vituperation was vollied forth by another candidate for the honours of the evening, who was becoming impatient at his rival being able to hold out so long. An old woman, who sat next to him, with a pipe in her mouth, and a man's tattered coat buttoned round her, remonstrated with him—

"Och, accushla, shure ye wouldn't have him belie the stock from which he sprung! Sorra a better dancer nor yerself in all the four counties when he's not to the fore; and one must live and let live,

anyhow. What's good for the goose is good for the gander."

"Whisht! Nanny, allanna, shure it's not a quadruped you'd be afther comparing me to. Faix, that's a dirty compliment fur honest flesh and blud; an' meself is behoven to ye fur that same——"

At that moment the O'Neile and his guests were seen at the door; when all assembled set up one long, loud cheer of "Long live the masther! more power to him!"

And then perceiving Lionel, about whom they had heard, a whisper ran through the ranks to this effect—

"Faix, an' he's handsome, anyhow, if his heart is in the right place."

"Shure, an' it's meself shouldn't wonder now but he's soft on Miss Catherine."

"Sorra one of it, Biddy; I'll be bound it's the other—I mane Miss Geraldine; anyhow she's the beauty of the family, and no mistake."

"Shure, allanna, beauty is only skin-deep! I would rather have Miss Catherine's little finger any day, than her whole illigant body; anyhow, she has a sowl, the darling! and that's more than the other has. It's herself is fairly aten up wid pride an' her fine manners; an', with all her put-on smiles, she has a stiff way wid her, that's not natural-like, that makes a body doubt sometimes that she belongs to the ould stock."

"Molly Read" (the one addressed by her maiden name, was a married woman), "ye're hard upon the purty young lady, for we are towld that ——" she pointed downwards, and crossed herself as she did so, "is not half as black as he is painted, and we are all of uz as God made uz—praise be to Him for that same!" Then, as she perceived Otway—"Shure enough, an' it's the young masther himself,—blessings on his handsome face! He looks like a born prince, every inch of him; shure he is iver hat-in-hand wid uz all, an' more's the pity that he is going to furin parts to be

made a gintleman of, as if he wasn't one already to the back-bone."

"Ye'r right, accorra; edication is a fine thing, but it can't always make the rale gintleman if it's not already born in him. My prayer is, that he may live till he dies, and when that misfortune comes, may every hair upon his head turn to mould-sixes, and light him to glory."

"By the powers! that's his Riverence; boys, make yer bows. Shure it don't matther if he's looking another way—do yer duty anyhow; shure he will feel it tho' he may not see it. Begorra! an' it's himself don't think it above him to touch the flur wid one of the girls. Faix, he's as nate a dancer as one would meet in a day's walk, and so light in the feet, that when he jumps up in the air, it's hard to think that he manes to come down agin."

A couple now stood up to take their places—a fine young man, and a handsome girl with glossy dark hair, blooming complexion, and brilliant teeth. She set-to, with all the energy she was capable of, to dance down her partner, who, every now and then would look slyly up at her with his soft, sleepy, grey eyes.

"That's right, Peggy; show him a taste o' your quality—an' that you may niver have a blind child but you may have a cripple to lade it, anyhow!"

"Botheration to you, Pat Dowlan; can't ye let an honest woman keep her ground widout pushing her about as if she were no betther than a rowling stone."

"Shure, an' I axes yer pardon, anyhow, ma'am, fur that same."

Whereupon the friendship would be made up, and the injured party, of the moment before, take him into her confidence by saying—

"Pat, do ye see that boy of the Houlahan's beyant there, who is now spaking wid the masther? Shure, an' he has guven his woice and his wote to the county member; an' a dacent, honest boy he is too, an' as

thick as two pays wid his Riverence, who has promised him twelve masses—candles an' all—for the good of his sowl. Faix, he ought to be jumping in his skin at the thought of it, an' small blame to him fur that same, when he knows beforehand that his sowl will be sung into glory. They tell me that he has ordered a beautiful shroud to be ready made and trimmed, that any lord or lady in the land would become a corpse just for the pleasure of putting it upon him."

Pat Houlahan, the boy so familiarly alluded to, was fully eighty years of age, and a great-grandfather.

"Now, Molly, ye're not going to give it up?" And the pair still danced on; the man with his head thrown back, arms a-kimbo, while the girl had her eyes modestly fixed upon her bare feet, from which she never once raised them during the dance.

A pause now ensued, and a glass of hot whiskey-punch, with two large slices of lemon in it, was handed to the piper. He soon emptied it, and smacked his lips long afterwards at the pleasant remembrance it evidently made upon his inward man. His eloquence was awakened by its genial influence, and he began to hold forth, as was usual with him upon such occasions —when surrounded by the wondering eyes and ears of his admirers.

"Now, boys, you've not been afther hearing of the new landlord down at the cross-roads, who has been draining, cutting, and fencing, and I don't know what all besides! and what's worse, he has thrown all the little farms together, so that nearly all the poor tenants have not a shelter for themselves and families, but are obliged to go lie in the ditches, or any ould barn they can find."

Michael, as he fully anticipated, was suddenly interrupted in the middle of his gossip by his demonstrative audience, who now with one accord cried out from the depths of their lungs—"Three groans for the dirty blackguard!"

The piper went on again—"Shure, boys, you need not be afther wasting your lungs upon the scoundrel, for the boys have paid him out for it at last. Shure, it was too long they let him have his own way. It was bad enough when he would make no deduction for bad crops or diseased cattle, and refused to give the poor craters any assistance in their sore need, but seized all they had. An' shure they bore all that, bekase it was well-used they were to the dirty work. But when it came to improving, shure, that was the worst principle he ever hit upon. It's not model landlords we want here, but just ones—eh, boys?"

A volley of voices—"Hear, hear!"

"And so, as fate would have it, one fine night, my gintleman was found upon the steps of his own dur, wid a tarnation big bullet sent right through his head; though they might have made shorter work of it, and have sent it through his heart, only they had their little doubts as to his possessing that grand organ of universal philantrophy."

"And so it's for sartain, Mick, that the villain is kilt intirely?"

"As sartain as that I have more hairs on my head than I can count, nor you either."

"Faix, Mick, and if it were a wig I could do that same," was hazarded by one of the bystanders.

"Hold yer whisht, will ye? and let me come to the broth of the story. Well, several of the boys, whose little cabins were taken from them to add to the defunct gintleman's own comfort——"

"Gintleman!" with great derision by all.

"Shure, an' he's more desarving of that title now than he iver was before—but, as I was saying—to add to his comfort—which he was not born to, the dirty spalpeen—they were suspected, and, as you may well think, hunted up and down like a pack of wolves, though they were not in want of a hiding-place, for all the neigbours were willin' and ready to take them in,

Well, as I happened to be playing at the wedding of Mat Maher's little girl, who should run in, in the height of the divarsion, but as dacent a boy as ye ever laid yer two born eyes upon, and crying out for dear life—'Shure, an' the dirty polis are afther me, hide me, Mat, accushla!' 'Wid all the pleasure in life,' said Mat; 'come along ye lucky dog, shure, it's in no less a place than inside the empty barril upon which his Riverence has been houlding forth to the new-married couple. Now, jump in, for there's no time to be lost; and to make the thing more sartin, his Riverence won't mind discoursing a little longer to the happy pair, till the thieves have come and gone again.'

"So, boys, his Riverence having consented to the plan, they handed him up once more upon the platform wid all honours. An' shure, he went on wid thundering eloquence, to the no small fright of the spalpeen inside; for every word that came out of his blessed mouth was accompanied by no end of stamps and jumps upon the barril, which sounded fur all the world like a kittle-drum bating a retrate. When, as we all expected, who should run in but the polis, all wid their little bits of wood in their hand; while at the top of their voices they said—

"'You're hidin' a fellow here, as you think, for murder?'

"Before he could say another word, he was cut short by Mat's bawlin' out—

"'Sorra a bit of it, Sir; shure ye're out in your tactics for once in ye'r life.'

"'For murder, as I said.' Then, in a stentorian voice—'But he's not a murderer, he's worse—he's a horse-stealer! Divil a lie I am telling you.'

"Begorra, boys, shure the words were scarcely out of his mouth, when a hullaballoo was set up by all the company: the priest jumped off the barril like a shot; while all the neighbours thought they would give the mane, lying blackguard a little healthy exercise, by

rolling him up and down before giving him up to justice. Afther which they all set to, and pulled him out—the dirty spalpeen, who disgraced his family by horse-stealin', and then came to impose upon honest people; when they, in their innocence, believed that he was one of the boys who had helped to send a bullet through the model landlord's head—the trayter!"

The O'Neile and Lionel had approached during the latter part of the story. The latter, horrified at what he had just heard, turned to his uncle, and said—

"Am I to understand, Sir, that in Ireland murder is treated as such a venial offence? What can justify such an atrocity? In my country, such things are not allowed, I am happy to say."

"Hush, man! speak under your breath if those are your sentiments; we may be heard. There is only this difference, my boy—that where your Englishman murders for money, an Irishman murders out of patriotism; his principles require this of him, and he can't go against them. A man has no right to have his home knocked down over his very head, and that for the mere caprice of a model-landlord agent. I am proud to say it is the only thing for which they murder a man in Ireland. Sure you never hear of the robberies, poisonings, and immoralities in this country, that take place in England and elsewhere. Here a man thinks if he is to be hanged, let it be for reform. Why, it is only within the last few years that they have ceased to execute a fellow for taking what did not belong to him; theft and murder met with the same punishment. Ah! those were terrible times—terrible times!"

"But, uncle, how is a man to defend his person and property from such injustice as we have now listened to?"

"Simply by altering the institutions of the country, which the people hold in detestation."

"And why, uncle? only because they wish to make

their own laws? and that, in my opinion, would be anything but lawful."

"You're mistaken there, Lionel. Give them constant employment, regular wages, and manufactures to work in; in fact, give them any honest occupation for which they will be well paid, and you will find them both willing and able to work with the best. You know that an Irishman, in any country but his own, always becomes hard-working, persevering, and prosperous. And why is it so? you will ask. Because he finds a new field for his labour, competition to urge him forward in the race, and reward for his work; whereas, in his own unfortunate country, things remain stagnant and neglected, although Ireland is particularly an agricultural country. And this is not the case with the working classes alone; look higher, and you will see that an Irishman, if he wishes to make a career and a home, must look for it in Spain or America; for his own land has little to offer him except rebellion, oppression, and penal servitude for political offences, which, as a true-born Irishman and a patriot, he cannot very well avoid."

The O'Neile now thought it high time to withdraw with Lionel and his other guests, as he remarked the Argus' eyes that were riveted upon them both, as they stood apart conversing in low confidential tones. They joined the gentlemen, who were also upon the point of leaving the merry scene, whose votaries betrayed such careless indifference as to what the morrow might have in store for them: with them the proverb was truly verified—"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

They all seemed to have few regrets, which chiefly arose from the reckless, indolent let-every-thing-take-care-of-itself manner so peculiar to the Irish character—ever ready to please, and be pleased. The only time Paddy showed any contrariety of feeling and activity of mind was when any one appealed to his patriotism; then all the powers, all the energies of his

being were aroused, and he would run through fire and water to prove his loyalty and devotedness to his country. Spite of all their tatters, there was no denying but that they were a fine, handsome, well-grown race.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"The forms of the grim knight and pictured saint
Looked living in the moon; and as you turn
Backward and forward to the echoes faint
Of your own footsteps, voices from the urn
Appear to wake, and shadows wild and quaint
Start from the frames which fence their aspects stern,
As if to ask how you can dare to keep
A vigil there, where all but death should sleep."

BYRON.

THE visitors had taken their departure, and the family once more returned to the parlour. The O'Neile, taking the key from his pocket and unlocking the door, was the first to enter, candle in hand, when, to his astonishment, he found Geraldine stretched apparently lifeless upon the sofa. As he looked upon her inanimate form, his heart reproached him for the harsh measures he had taken against her; but he was puzzled to know what could have caused her present state. She was not subject to fainting fits; indeed, it was the first time he had ever seen her in one.

Catherine was eagerly sought for, but at first without success. When she made her appearance, she hastened to render assistance to her cousin, and begged of those present to help her in carrying Geraldine upstairs to her room, where she could be placed upon the bed. The O'Neile carried her himself, followed by the girls and Otway, who was trying to hide the tears, which, in spite of all his endeavours, would force themselves down

his face. Geraldine was his favourite sister; perhaps it was her beauty and grace that attracted him more towards her, than to the homely Mary or to the dignified Catherine. He had a great, almost a strange, passionate love for everything beautiful, both in nature and art. When a very little fellow, he would content himself with gazing at a brilliant flower, face, or picture, which in themselves were lovely; but he had an insurmountable dislike, not to say repugnance, to whatever was unseemly to the sight. Once, when scarcely more than three years of age, he happened to be standing at an open window with his nurse. An ugly old beggar suddenly appearing before him, sent him into strong convulsions; and for days afterwards he fancied he saw the figure that had so disturbed his imagination. From that time, whenever chance or accident brought any unsightly object before him, he was known to shut his eyes till it had passed out of his sight, when he would rush to Geraldine, and, looking up into her face, say—"Diny, look at Otty, and make a very bad face;" as if, upon this childish principle, he thought to convert beauty for the moment into ugliness, he would then exclaim with an approving smile—"Otty don't care when Diny's ugly."

His father, and Catherine in particular, tried to obliterate such a dangerous susceptibility from his young and impressionable mind, and they had to some extent, though not wholly, succeeded in doing so. She would often take him with her in some of her rambles to the neighbouring cabins, and then show him many an object of compassion, upon whose misshapen body and distorted face deformity and disease had set their seal; and when her little cousin turned away from them with disgust or fear, she would draw him to her, in gentle, solemn tones telling him that—"God, who had made him, had also made that poor little child so ugly; and perhaps loved him better than he did Otway, or cared for him just as much. That all

things created by God were in His sight lovely—who saw them with pure eyes,—when to us they often seem repelling, because of our sinful hearts, which judge them through our eyes; and that as in heaven they would all be beautiful and bright, he must never forget this, whenever he should see an ugly, disgusting human creature." This seemed rather paradoxical to Otway's little brain, and it often occurred to him, when gazing upon his own lovely sister Geraldine; and he wondered if God loved her less than Mary, or any other unpretending individual.

Such efforts as these upon Catherine's part to reason him out of his dislike and fear of ugliness, lessened his abhorrence of such, without weakening his admiration for the beautiful. One, indeed, would have imagined that his mother, before his birth, like the Pompeian women of old, had been surrounded by those beautiful productions of art, many of which still remain to us, in order that all her ideas and impressions might be moulded by them, and that they mght happily transmit themselves to the infant's mind.

The poor little boy, as he now looked upon the pale face of Geraldine, remembered how unkind he had been to her, and his heart smote him for it; he cried bitterly, calling fondly upon her name as he did so. Restoratives were applied, at first with little success, but gradually her breath came; she slowly opened her eyes and looked about her in a vacant manner; then, as she recognised her father, shut them quickly again, and sighing, said, in an entreating tone—"Don't! oh don't let it come near me!"

"What does all this mean, Geraldine?" said her father, "and what drove you out of your senses? come, be reasonable, and don't speak in that babyish way, just like a child that one was going to threaten with a bogyman."

This rough manner of addressing her had the desired effect, for she immediately sat up, and began to relate

what had taken place after she had been locked in by her father. She said—"I at first cried out——"

"That, we are already aware of," interrupted the O'Neile, "for it was loud enough to be heard all over the house."

"Then, having exhausted myself with doing so, I went over to the harp and commenced singing."

"Ah, ah! your grief was but of short duration, my girl, when you contrived to sing at one side of your mouth, just after you had ceased screaming on the other. I see, Geraldine, that you possess a versatility of talent that I did not give you credit for."

"Dear father!" said Mary, "you are making a joke of it, while you are forgetting that poor Geraldine has had all the suffering, as you can well see by her ghastly face."

Otway's curiosity having got the better of his tears, and perceiving that his sister had now come to her senses, said excitedly—

"Do tell us, Geraldine, pray do, what frightened you so much."

She began from where she had left off—"I commenced singing, when it seemed to me that another voice, at first rather faintly, but afterwards more distinctly, mingled itself with mine, and that when I stopped to listen, it ceased too. At last, feeling nervous at the sound of my own voice, and the strange sound that seemed to echo it, I went over to the fire-place and began to arrange the logs of wood in order to distract, and in some measure dispel, the gloomy thoughts that were fast growing upon me. After having stirred the fire into a blaze, I stood slowly up from my kneeling posture, and looking abstractedly around, perceived to my amazement that the candle, which a moment before had been burning, was now extinguished, but by what means it became so was a mystery to me. There was but little light in the room, for the blaze from the fire was very fitful. A feeling of terror crept over me,

heightened by recalling what Otway had said to me about the ghost from the middle tower. For my life, I dared not sit or stand before the fire with my back to the apartment, but looked straight down it, my glance, as I did so, taking in every outline of the furniture, which seemed to my terrified senses at that moment, to assume all sorts of hideous, haunting forms. To have died at that instant would have been happiness, but the worst was yet to come. I mechanically began to repeat my prayers, feeling a sort of protection in the mere action. Suddenly there seemed to rise out of the wall, just underneath grandfather's picture, a tall dark shadow, that to my horrified sight appeared to be advancing towards me. All the blood in my veins seemed to freeze; with an imploring gesture I stretched out my arms as if to ward it off, then with a loud cry I suppose I must have fallen senseless upon the sofa, close to which I had been standing, for I remember no more till I was recalled to my senses by you all."

"My dear child," said the O'Neile, "you allow your imagination too great a liberty; you must have only dreamed what you have just related. Mary, let her have a cup of hot, strong coffee; that will help to do away with whatever fancies she has got into her head. As to your statement about the candle having suddenly become extinguished, it is quite possible that in the nervous state you had worked yourself into, and in your absence of mind, you put it out yourself—or, what is more probable still, that when you threw some fresh wood upon the fire, the current of air raised by it caused the candle to go out."

Geraldine, who occupied the same room with Mary, insisted that one of the girls should watch by her for that night, declaring it would be quite impossible for her to sleep after what she had witnessed, and that the dreadful figure was still haunting her. Mary volunteered to sit up, but Catherine negatived the offer, by declaring that she would herself keep watch at the head

of Geraldine's bed, and read to her till she fell asleep. Geraldine was satisfied at her cousin's proposal, for she knew that Catherine would be much less likely to yield to sleep than either Mary or any of the servant girls. Whereupon, after seeing Mary to bed and Geraldine undressed, she took her place, and began reading in a clear under-tone, so as not to disturb Mary, till, as she had expected, Geraldine, despite of all her fears to the contrary, fell asleep. She started every now and then, and looked nervously towards the chair at her bedside to see if Catherine was still there. On seeing the half-reclining form and thoughtful countenance, with its bright look, in which no foreshadowing of sleep lay, gazing intently and somewhat pitifully at her, Geraldine composedly shut her own again, as if assured of her safety.

An hour or two might thus have passed, when the hitherto watchful Catherine, unconsciously yielding to the fatigue that overcame her, let the book, which she held in her hand, fall upon her lap. Nothing disturbed the stillness that reigned in the room, except the regular breathing of the sleeping Mary, whose upturned face, with its peaceful happy expression, lay half in light, half in shadow, at the farthest end of the apartment. Geraldine's beautiful face, so pale a few hours before, was now flushed with feverish excitement; the long, waving auburn hair fell about it and upon the shoulders and arms that lay without the coverlid, in dishevelled grace.

The stillness was suddenly broken by an abrupt and terrified shriek from Geraldine, who sat up wildly in her bed, and pointed to the half-opened door opposite to which it stood. Desperately seizing Catherine's arm that lay near her, she exclaimed—"Oh see! It is coming again to me! It will not leave me! Look there, Catherine!"

As she spoke, she pointed with a wild gesture in the direction. Was she dreaming? No,—for the form al-

[illegible] excited, as seen by Geraldine, stood half within the doorway, having upon its face a cowl that let none of the countenance be seen except two large flaming eyes, and which at last made a sign to some one on other [illegible] compartment. Catherine must have seen it, for [illegible] or that Geraldine still grasped, she [illegible] advanced in a fearless manner towards [illegible] apparition, which gradually disappeared as [illegible] Geraldine's and Mary's unspeakable [illegible] went out, shutting the door after her. [illegible] instant, she returned alone and even smiled [illegible] tranquillise Geraldine's fears by assuring [illegible] that the figure which she appeared to see, [illegible] even as she rose down stairs even in the [illegible] could see anything to cause [illegible] however as this Geraldine was not to be [illegible] Catherine's assertion, and her cries soon [illegible] her cousin. He was furious at [illegible] absence, and began singing [illegible] manner. This made his appearance [illegible] tardiness serious [illegible] were numerous in the extreme. [illegible] entered a room when he appeared [illegible] as well have remained [illegible] in the middle of the [illegible] and calling upon all [illegible] at the end of the [illegible]

[illegible] and began shaking [illegible] Hold your [illegible] to the stairs and [illegible] ride for his [illegible] Lazuire's,— [illegible] them at [illegible] that my [illegible] and must [illegible] Reverence to [illegible] which she un-

fortunately thinks herself possessed of; and let him not count a hundred till he is safe and sound back again, and the two gentlemen with him." So saying, he pulled rather than led Phil to the door, which he shut upon him; he then returned, and, shivering as he was, began to cuddle himself about, as he strode with hasty steps up and down the room, every now and then approaching the bed upon which sat the unruly and terrified Geraldine. At one moment he would shake his hand at her in a threatening manner, and the next, as he looked at her frightened face and trembling body, soothingly appeal to her filial instincts, to have a little compassion upon him and the rest of the family, and not keep them all out of their beds, shivering and shaking.

Phil, when next he made his appearance, looked more in keeping with his position as family butler, than he did when first summoned by his master. He now ushered in the doctor and the priest. The former had a small medicine-chest under his arm, for he really imagined that he was called upon to administer all sorts of antidotes for no less a case than poisoning; while Father Maguire, in his priestly robes and accompanied by a pretty curly-headed, barefooted urchin, with a white and red surplice thrown over his every-day rags, held, with both his hands, the vessel containing the incense, which was thought to be required for the momentous occasion.

Catherine, being the most clear-headed of the family, considered some explanation due to both gentlemen, thus unceremoniously summoned when their services could be of but little avail, and that too, upon a cold, raw night in November. She had tried to convince her uncle, when giving his orders to Phil, of the inutility of what he was doing; but, excited beyond himself at the moment, she could not persuade him to listen to her, till the doctor and priest had already arrived. By this time he had somewhat cooled down; and being a little ashamed at having acted so precipitately, he

allowed Catherine to explain matters as best she could.

Geraldine, in the meantime, being made to understand by her father what she must undergo from the united services of both doctor and priest, became more reasonable. The doctor gave her a sedative; and Father Maguire, at the O'Neile's request, read a few prayers, and commanded her, with his impressive voice and never-failing influence, to dismiss whatever fancies her disturbed and overheated imagination had conjured up. Both applications had the desired effect, and she soon fell into a profound and motionless sleep, from which she did not awaken till the sun was high in the heavens. The O'Neile, when all had been restored to order, insisted upon both gentlemen remaining and taking an early breakfast with him, which Phil, he said, would soon prepare. They gladly acquiesced; and thus made the best of matters by going down to the parlour, in which a roaring fire was already blazing away, with the kettle singing upon the hearth beside it. Thus, by the dawning light of a cheerless November morning, which entered through the opened shutters, and that of the two mould candles placed upon the breakfast-table, they managed to beguile the time with tea, buttered toast, and devilled goose from the remains of the yesterday's dinner (or rather supper, to judge from the hour it took place), without feeling in the least annoyed at what had occurred, and in perfect good-fellowship with their host.

CHAPTER XIX.

"The boatman paused—'Methought I heard
A child's distressful cry!'
'Twas but the howling winds of night,'
Lord William made reply.

And near them they beheld a child;
Upon a crag he stood—
A little crag, and all around
Was spread the rising flood."

SOUTHEY.

WE must now relate the circumstances of the catastrophe that was fated to overshadow the family of O'Neile.

It was a bleak, cloudy day, towards the end of February; a high wind had stormed all through the night, and helped in its swift course to dry up the ground, which the incessant rain of the last few months had rendered soft and slimy. Catherine O'Neile stood within the porch of the hall-door, watching the wandering clouds above her, as they chased each other in the lowering, troubled sky. She was upon the point of starting for a long walk, and, with the usual indifference to wind and weather evinced by the native Irish of all classes, was without anything as a defence against the storm, should it overtake her, except a little scarlet cloak thrown carelessly about her shoulders.

She was soon joined by her uncle and Otway. The former was in search of Geraldine, whom the boy affirmed to have seen going out half-an-hour before, when he was up-stairs at the window; but before he could come down and overtake her, to his great disappointment he found she had disappeared, though she had promised to take him with her, and he must now remain at home all day, for Lionel had gone out shooting or fishing,

Thus speaking, he threw himself against one of the pillars near which they were standing, with a sad, dissatisfied air.

"Why not ask your cousin Catherine to take you with her, my boy?" said his father.

"Oh, Catherine don't want me, she likes much better to stroll about by herself — besides" — he lowered his voice, and looked at her in a deprecating manner, while he muttered—"we are not friends this morning."

"What! you have both been quarrelling again?"

"No, not exactly that, daddy, but we disagreed about something, and Catherine taunted me about becoming unworthy of the name of O'Neile."

At these words, the O'Neile's face flushed up for a moment: they evidently recalled something painful to his mind, when Catherine said, good-humouredly—

"But who gave the provocation, my little cousin?"

The O'Neile seemed reassured. "Ah! I see, politics again, eh? Then I don't wonder at your both disagreeing, for I know Catherine to be a true blue, and worthy of the soil that has given her birth. No doubt she attacked the Saxons again, and you, you little renegade, defended them, and that for the sake of your hero Lionel, who has crammed all sorts of chivalrous deeds into your curly pate."

"Oh, daddy!"—Otway now seemingly forgot his troubles at the mention of his favourite topic—"daddy dear! you should hear Lionel tell about Saint George and the Dragon, Guy of Warwick, and the exploits of King Arthur and Llewellyn the Brave." The boy's cheek glowed with animation and pleasure as he excitedly enumerated all his heroes, yet he had scarcely named the last, when Catherine interrupted him.

"Llewellyn the Brave, who was defeated and slain by the English, and whose head was put on the Tower of London. A truly heroic death and commemoration for Mr. Herbert to dilate upon!"

"No, no, dad, it had nothing to do with that. Catherine was vexed at my saying, that when I became a man I would not place myself under the guidance of a priest, but choose my own counsellors—if needs must be—and not have them forced upon me. She became very angry, and told me that such ideas were not my own, but had been given to me."

"And I don't think that Catherine was very far wrong there. I warn you, child, not to indulge in such opinions before Father Maguire." This was spoken sternly, and with an almost imperceptible tremor in the voice. Then turning to his niece, the O'Neile said—

"Catherine, you will allow him to accompany you? Poor little fellow, he must have a walk; he has been working hard all the morning, preparing his lessons for the priest."

"With all my heart, uncle."

The O'Neile pressed her hand, while he said—"And, Catherine, to avoid disputes on the way, let him tell you the story of the fellow who escaped from the county gaol the other day, after he had been sentenced to death, and that for no less a crime than stealing, quartering, and finally eating his neighbour's pig, who, by-the-bye, happened to be fourth cousin to Patsy Maher, who was uncle to the Jew-broker. They say that the latter put him up to it, and helped him to steal it. Martin has just told us all about it; I will give you his own words:—'Shure an' it was all in consitheration of the family tie between them, yer honor; it's himself took it sore to heart, that any of his kit or kin should harbour such an unclane baste as a Jew, wid whom no good Christian durst eat or keep company.'"

Catherine smiled, in spite of herself, as she listened to what Martin had said, and, forgetting her recent disagreement with her little cousin, she took him by the hand, leaving the O'Neile to enter the house. They both set off at a brisk pace, that soon brought

them to the broad expanse of moorland, beyond which were visible the long dark points of irregular cliffs that lined the coast. Otway lingered every now and then to pluck some of the long, green plants, which he flourished in the air from very exuberance of spirits, Catherine walking on, seemingly lost in thought. They were now rapidly approaching the cliffs, when suddenly a thought seemed to strike her; she stopped abruptly, and exclaimed—

"Why, Otway, I had nearly forgotten; we must take the path to our right, which we have just left behind us." She turned back the way they had come. The boy appeared disappointed, and remonstrated; but in vain.

"Catherine, I wished so very much to see if there were any fishing-vessels out to-day. Besides, Castello told me to be on the look-out for a homeward-bound from America. Do let us return! only for a few moments!" He seized hold of her dress as he spoke, to urge her on, but she resisted him; and as he looked up into her face, he was struck by the strange expression that had come over it.

"Not to-day, Otway." Then, with an unusual tenderness in her voice, she said—"Otway, I have never yet begged of you to do anything for my sake; but now, for the first time, I want you to give me a promise. Will you do so, and perform it very faithfully, like a true knight? It is not very difficult."

"Oh, yes! that I will, Catherine," he answered, delightedly. "What is it? Is it something particular? You know I should like it all the better for that. Ah! I think I know what it is—you want to ride my little horse, till yours is cured of it's lameness. So you can; I don't mind doing without it for some days."

"No, Otway, that's not the favour I require."

"Then it must be"—he hesitated as if afraid to express the thought that was uppermost in his mind—"you want me to promise—not to—make—faces behind

Father Maguire's back?" The last sentence he tried to get over as quick as he could, as if it were a dangerous one, and then continued—"That would be difficult, yet, if I gave you my word not to do so, you know that I should keep it." This was said with much dignity for so young a boy.

To his astonishment Catherine answered—"No, my request is much easier, and only requires to be kept for some weeks—not always."

She bent down caressingly to him, and putting his cap back, parted the dark wavy hair from his brow, gazing intently into his face, as if she would there read his inmost thoughts. Though Catherine possessed a very tender heart, and was capable of the truest and deepest affection, she rarely, if ever, let it be seen by every one.

"Do you know, Otway, that I love you very dearly, and would do anything in reason to give you pleasure? I know I may often appear harsh and perhaps cold to you, and that, with a child's judgment, you have often thought me severe when I only meant to chide; for if I did not do it, there is no one to tell you of your faults—your father excepted, and he cannot continually be looking after you, nor can he understand you so well as I do. You are so like—so very like your——" she did not finish the sentence. "You are my own faithful, brave little cousin, who is one day to reflect in your own person, and uphold the honour of, the house of O'Neile, and I feel that you will be honourable and true, Otway."

The boy looked up at her as she spoke, with a pleased and proud face, while he said—

"Tell me, Catherine, was not my brother Pierce also honourable and true? and, if so, why has he left us all for so many, many years? I was so little at that time, that I scarcely remember him. When I ask papa about Pierce, he always turns away, or pretends not to hear me; and when the servants speak of him, it is generally in

a low voice, and a half-frightened manner, as if they were afraid that any one should hear them. But what do you think of Pierce? for you also never talk about him." He looked her full in the face as he put the question, which came so abruptly and unexpected, that Catherine coloured violently, yet did not answer.

"You know that he is your cousin, just as I am; Geraldine often talks about him. He must have been very wicked, for she told me that he robbed papa, and——"

Catherine put her hand to his mouth to keep back the words he was about to utter, and sternly said—

"Otway, do not say that again. Geraldine has not spoken the truth; she never—no, never loved her brother Pierce! besides, at the time he left his home, she was still too young to know much about his troubles, or to judge him in any way. Otway, you must always bear in mind that he is your brother, and that he often played with you, and carried you about in his arms, was very good to you, and fond of you, when you were a helpless, little child. Besides, one should always love their own, no matter what others may say or think of them; the world is too often harsh and unmerciful in its judgments of the weaknesses and errors of others."

"Yes, that may be; but how can one love what one does not see, or has no remembrance of? That's not possible, Catherine."

"Tell me, Otway, do you not love God?"

"What a question!"

"Answer it."

"Why, one must love Him. Every one does."

"And yet they have never seen Him."

"Seen Him! no."

"According to your theory, then, how can they love Him?"

"I know, Catherine, but I cannot explain it; I think I must feel it without being able to tell it."

"That's it, Otway; His spirit, goodness, and truth are felt by those who love Him; they love Him by faith—not face to face, but in spirit. God is love, and those whom He has given us we must try and love —not always because they are faultless, but rather on account of their weakness and their afflictions."

"Then you think I ought to love Pierce?"

"Yes, decidedly."

"But when I don't know him?"

"You will some day, I trust."

"I can wait till then."

"Child! you love your mother—at least, her memory, and yet you have nò remembrance of her, for she died when you were an infant."

He laughed somewhat incredulously, as he said—

"Yes, naturally I love my mother! every one must love his mother. And I like you sometimes, Catherine, yet not every day. I think love must be a very changeable sort of feeling."

"No, not always, for you don't like your father less one day than another, do you?"

He seemed for a moment a little puzzled, and did not answer; and Catherine, thinking she had taxed his reasoning powers sufficiently for that day, took both his hands in hers as she said—"Now, Otway, I hope we shall be friends, if not altogether in words, at least in mind and heart; so shake hands upon it."

"Yes, yes, Catherine! But now tell me"—with an air of importance—"what I must do for you?"

She answered his demand in words, which though trivial in themselves, were uttered with such solemnity, that the boy could only look at her in amazement.

"Will you promise me, Otway, that you will on no account, unless accompanied by your father, walk near or approach the cliffs"—and she pointed in the direction, —"at least, not for many weeks to come, or while your cousin, Mr. Herbert, remains at O'Neile Court?"

"Not walk near the cliffs! Is that the promise you

wished me to make? such a silly thing, Catherine!" and he laughed derisively at the very idea. At the same time, his attention was attracted by something in the distance, and the next moment he sprung forward with a joyous bound, exclaiming, "at last!" and was off as fast as his legs could carry him, in the direction of the cliffs. Catherine darted after him, calling upon his name; but she might as well have called to the wind, for he was soon lost to sight, by an abrupt turn of the cliffs. In her excitement, she took a wrong path, and came out far beyond the spot from whence she calculated that he had disappeared. On she went, despair in her face and movements, while the wind whistled around her as if in mocking of her misery. She had not proceeded any great distance, when her steps were arrested by the sound of a loud shriek. She fell upon her knees, and, with clasped hands, cried out—"It has come! I have not dreamed it! Oh, it is more than I can bear! Oh, why—why was I born to this! what fearful fatality has followed my steps! yet it may not be too late." And she arose, and ran eagerly in the direction from whence the scream had sounded. Catherine soon gained the cliffs, along the edge of which she ran, regardless of the danger, for one false step would have precipitated her several hundred feet beneath. She now began to descend the slippery, almost perpendicular rocks, occasionally jumping from one to the other, tearing her clothes and hands as she did so, but she felt no pain, feared no danger;—that one piercing cry still rang in her ears. At length, she clung to the last point of support, and springing lightly upon her feet, gained the sands. The tide was receding, so that there was room enough to walk. As she proceeded thus mechanically, and straining her sight in all directions, her attention was at last riveted by the sound of voices; she followed their murmur, and upon nearing the spot, perceived two men apparently bending over something beneath them. She rushed forward, when her worst fears were confirmed,

by seeing on the beach the bleeding and senseless form of the self-willed boy, who, but a short time before, was so full of life and spirits. The fishermen, for such their dress bespoke them to be, drew back at Catherine's approach, while the elder of the two, in reproachful yet respectful terms, addressed her.

"Shure, Miss, and how had you the heart to do it? He was but a child, and the weakest."

At first Catherine did not quite catch the sense of those fearful words, that accused her as the perpetrator of the tragedy; but there was no doubting it from their looks and manner.

She drew near to them in a nervous way, while she excitedly said—

"You cannot mean—you dare not say, that I—" she could scarcely bring herself to say the fatal words—"have taken his life!"

"Not intentionally, Miss, shure an' you could'nt have the warm heart beating now in your body, and have done this cowld-blooded deed, for it's worse nor murder, as you can see he is not kilt intirely, for he breathes, anyhow."

"He breathes! did you say? Oh, Heaven be thanked for that; for there may still be hope!"

"Better fur him, Miss, an' he did'nt, fur he will niver while he lives have any strength or sense in his body again. Shure, an' his poor head is not right, even if he speak. The widow Dowlan's boy had the same mishap some years back, and though he lived for many a long day afther, shure niver a word came out of his mouth till he was dying, when he looked up and recognised his poor ould mother, who was breakin' her heart at the sight of him."

A chill fell upon Catherine as she listened, while the man continued—"We saw it all, Miss, though at the time far out; how you stopped, and made signs like for him to go away, which he would not take, but kept close by your side. You pushed him from you several times,

but he kept coming back, till at last there was a struggle between you both, when he began pulling you. Suddenly you caught him round the waist, and commenced to whirl him round, always coming nearer and nearer the edge of the cliff. At last, with a quick movement you freed yourself, while he staggered backwards, lost his footing, and then we saw him tumbling down from rock to rock. We pushed our oars as fast as they would go, but only arrived at the spot a few moments before you made your appearance, which we did not count upon, Miss, for shure enough we saw you run away when the body fell."

"Run away! It is too shocking! Who will believe me, now? But you cannot swear to my having done it. It is true you may have seen a woman's form, but then it might have been any one else."

"Och! Miss, shure an' I am mightily afraid that it may be afther turning your brain, just as well as the poor little masther's there. Shure, there could be no mistake, Miss"—and he pointed as he spoke to the bright red cloak that Catherine had on her,—"every mother's sowl in the place knows that it is only the family up at the Court, and ould Nelly in the Glen, who wears such."

Catherine upon hearing this, started up as if she were electrified, and then hid her face with her hands to hide her emotion.

"We are sorry for you, Miss; shure it must be a hard blow for you, and at times the best of us are irritated and drawn beyont ourselves. And shure an' if it had been in any other spot but the one it happened, where would have been the harm?" Then turning to his companion, he said—"Jimmy, just run up to the farm, and tell the boys to bring down a stretcher and some blankets; the young gintleman must be taken to his home at once, that the doctor may see him. Begorra, it's a sorrowful home that same will be this blessed day!—that my ould bones should have lived to see it! I'll wait here till you come back." Then, as his eye

fell upon the wretched girl leaning against the cliffs, he went to her, and endeavoured to soothe her remorse, which he imagined to be the principal cause of her grief.

"Don't take on so, Miss; shure then, an' if it could be worse than it is, we know that anyhow it is the will of God."

"No, no! passion and deceit can never be the will of God. Say rather, the temptations of the Evil One, our bad angel, who was then near——" she sobbed out violently, without finishing the sentence; while the man was now convinced that she could only be alluding to herself at the time.

"Anyhow, Miss, it ought to be a comfort to you to know that he has no sinse as to his sufferings."

Catherine now approached close to the sad spectacle, but it was a fearful trial for her to look at that helpless, disfigured form, with the large eyes now glaring unmeaningly around, and the mouth writhing with spasms. She took the inanimate little hand in hers, and, by repeated kisses and caresses, tried to obtain a sign of recognition; but in vain.

"Oh, Otway! don't you know me? I am Catherine, your own cousin Catherine!" but the only answer she received was a vacant stare.

After nearly an hour's absence, the men with the stretcher made their appearance, and lifted the body slowly and gently upon it. They proceeded up a path cut into the rocks, and soon gained the high land above; Catherine watching them till they had passed out of sight. Then, with a wild, desolate cry, she fled along the sands, whither she cared not, so long as it kept her in bodily action; for as yet, she dared not stop to commune with her own sad and weary thoughts. To go back to the Court, she could not; would it ever be a home to her again? At one moment she thought of returning and confessing the whole truth, of which she had had for weeks a presentiment, but which she had kept to her-

self, from fear of being misunderstood, or looked upon as an unreasonable visionary. Would she be believed now? and if so, what satisfaction could she derive from the fact? It was too late; the evidence of the two fishermen, who had both witnessed the concluding part of the transaction, would be too strong against her, for they honestly declared that they had not the slightest doubt of her guilt. Circumstances were fearfully against her, for had she not that very morning quarrelled with the boy? Yet, strong as all these seeming proofs were, she felt that it would still be possible for her to prove her innocence to her uncle, by criminating the truly guilty one: she shuddered as the idea crossed her mind. No, far better suffer all; what did it matter to her, who had gone through so much, and who felt she was doomed to suffer all her life, not only for herself, but for others. It would be but one sacrifice more; and her uncle, her good-hearted, kind uncle, who loved her so truly, and had such confidence in her integrity, this would be a dreadful blow to him—yet it might be still worse for him to know it was another, and that other——! No, no, she must leave it to time to unravel.

From utter exhaustion she was at last obliged to sit down upon the beach. The sun was sinking, and the last yellow streaks in the far-off horizon were becoming paler and less distinct, as they floated over the grey of the dark wintry sky. Catherine longed for the night to descend, for it would well accord with the troubled thoughts that burned within her.

Night is very often a soother to the afflicted and unhappy, for it seems to bring peace and repose to earth. Above all, nature feels its tender influence, when the flowers and plants fold their graceful drooping heads beneath its sheltering arms. Yet night is not silent to the human heart, for it bears many thoughts and tones on its overshadowing wings, bringing from the past all that was bright and sad; pleasure, enjoyment, remorse

and regret, all unite in longing for that rest and peace, which the loneliness and mystery of night suggest.

As Catherine sat thus motionless, her glance wandered over the boundless ocean at her feet, whose distant shores were once empires, but which, unlike all other earthly things, remains unchangeable from creation to eternity. Surely if we cannot contemplate that, without emotion of its solemnity, how must we feel towards the Hand that formed it!

CHAPTER XX.

"But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him . . . . .
He rose and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came;
He dropped the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired" . . . . . .

BYRON.

AT a late hour that night Catherine O'Neile entered the house with a nervous and stealthy step, and went up to her own room to collect a few things, which she intended taking away with her. Her resolution was fixed: she would leave without seeing her uncle, for she feared that her weakness, in his presence, might betray her secret.

She had not been long in the room, before she heard footsteps; she had left her door open, in order to be warned of the approach of any of the family, in case they should happen to come up-stairs. She had scarcely hidden herself behind the bed-curtains, when some one, holding a lighted candle, entered with a heavy, measured tread, and sighed wearily, saying—

"Not yet come back! May all the saints and the Holy Virgin look down upon her this night!"

Catherine recognised in the speaker the old butler, Phil. She quickly drew aside the curtain, and the next moment stood motionless before him, with her finger on her lips in token of silence.

At the figure, but imperfectly seen, the old man, with a smothered ejaculation, let the candle fall on the floor. Catherine picked it up and blew it, in order to relight it, while she said—

"Fear not, Phil, for it is I, Catherine, come back, for the last time, to say good-bye to the old home, and to take away with me what is mine."

"Oh, Miss Catherine! Miss Catherine!" And the faithful old servant wrung his hands, as he exclaimed—

"That you, the light of the masther's eyes, and the joy of his heart, his own right hand, and his blessed brother's only child—may the Lord rest his sowl!—should have lived to see this day of misery and sorrow. Oh, how had you the heart to do it to the poor innocent child?"

Catherine could hear no more—"You, too, you can believe this of me! Yet I am innocent. I would not have come here to-night, were I the guilty creature you think me."

There was so much truth, so much conviction in those few words, that the old man fell upon his knees, while he muttered, in a voice broken by emotion—

"Say it again, Miss, that blessed word. Shure an' I believe you now, as I did all along, in spite of reason and evidence. The murderin' villains! to say they saw you do it! Bad luck to them, anyhow! and that's my prayer to all their kit and kin. But where have you been till this hour o' the night? and why did you not return wid the boys, when they brought the little masther back? Why let them tell everything their own black way to the masther? But, Miss Catherine, allanna, you will come now, this very moment, to him,

and shure your bare word upon it will be gospel to him; come — come, this instant!" He seized hold of her, in his impatience to hurry her away; but she resisted all his efforts, and with a sorrowful voice, said—

"It may not be, Phil, I must be silent, though my heart should break in the task; but I know"—and she bent forward close to his ear, while she continued in a hushed tone—"the one who pushed him off the cliff,—know it so surely—oh, that I did not!"

Phil crossed himself. "May the Lord have mercy upon their sowl! But justice is justice, Miss, and it is your bounden duty to confess who the black-hearted person is."

"In this case, Phil, justice would be cruelty. Time alone can exonerate me, and I can wait for it; for the truth will be known, and from the only lips that would now be believed."

"Do you mane the poor helpless child, Miss? Then don't burthen your mind with such a false hope, for the doctors say that his reason has left him for iver, and though he may live for years, he will never talk, walk, or have any memory of past, present, or future again. They think it possible, before his last breath laves him, that consciousness may return."

"Then, Phil, I shall wait for that one moment of returning reason, which will bring death and peace to him, and trust to me; my poor, poor little cousin!"

"Anyhow, Miss, you need not be afther making a martyr of yourself before your time comes."

"No fear of that, Phil. I am not going to die as martyrs usually do. I believe that, with the will of God, I have still many years to live; for while martyrs die for truth, I hope to live for it."

"But only think, Miss, that if he ceased to live this night, or a short time after, from the effects of this stroke, you would then be tried for——" he stopped short, unable to add the dreadful word,—"and then it would behove you to speak out."

"No, even then I could not—could not bring to shame an——"

"Spake out, Miss; throw it off your mind, shure you'll sleep aisier for it."

Catherine would not yield to his solicitations, but asked him to help her put together her things, and begged of him to send them to her foster-mother's, who would know where to forward them to. She said that she had no time to lose, as the night was advancing, and she had still a long way to go.

"But, Miss Catherine, you will see the masther, anyhow, before you lave the ould place? Shure an' it would turn every good Christian crazy to see how he is taking on."

"I shall write a few lines of explanation to him, Phil, which you will give into his own hand. It is better for both of us that it should be so arranged, for the scene between us, were we to meet, would be too painful, and would do no good; I wish to spare him as much as possible."

Then, in as careless a manner as she could assume, she asked how her uncle had employed himself that day, and if Mr. Herbert and the rest of the family had been much together.

The old servant told her that the master had had a visit from Father Maguire, and, after he had gone, Miss Mary assisted him to arrange his papers and bills; that he was called, and told to fetch Geraldine, but replied, that she had gone out more than an hour before; when the master said, she was in her room, as he could distinctly hear footsteps overhead; "an' shure enough, Miss," said he, "I found her lying dressed upon the bed, wid a handkerchief bound round her head, and looking anything but herself. I tould her that her papa wished to see her about something or other; when she answered, 'Phil, go down and tell my father that I can't come; I am suffering so much from head-ache, and have been, all the morning.' 'Shure, an' I thought

you had gone out, Miss,' was my reply to her. 'Oh, yes, I have been out,' says she, 'but have returned some time.'

"A few moments later Mr. Herbert came in, and in a moody state of mind. When he heard that Miss Geraldine was keeping her room, he seemed to brighten up a bit; and when I tould him that you and Masther Otway had gone out wid one another, he left me, and went out again. Half-an-hour later I saw him returning onest more towards the house, as if for dear life; but when he reached the hall-dur, you might have knocked me down wid a straw, for he cried out—

"'Phil, where's yer Masther? I must see him at onest — must prepare him for a terrible shock; my cousin, his little son, has been throwed from the cliffs, and the boys are now carryin' him home, widout any sinse in his body. Oh, Phil! it's a terrible business! and to think that she—it is too terrible!' an' wid those few words he rushed into the Court. Thin the doctors and his Riverence were sent for, and not a long time since Mr. M'Cormick and Mr. Maitland arrived; for you see, Miss, that ill-news travels fast. Shure, it would do yer heart good to see Miss Mary, who is the raal comfort, rinning up and down the place, and tryin' to comfort the poor masther, when one would have thought that she had not the strength in her for it. But, I have always been tould that yer weak ones, who look for all the world like transparencies, have more spurrit in them than others, who are stronger; fur Miss Geraldine has done nothing, but lament and pour out her sorrows all the day long, and shure, an' it may be that she has the mighty head-ache and heart-ache by this time, but the sorra bit of comfort is she to her poor father—Heaven help him!"

Catherine, after taking an affectionate farewell of the old butler, stole noiselessly out the back-way, so as to avoid the possibility of meeting any of the family, and had but just gained the front of the house, when she

thought she heard footsteps close behind her. She turned to listen, and held her breath as she did so, when, as well as she could see for the obscurity of the night, a tall man stood beside her, and partly obstructed her advance. She remained silent, to ascertain what his intention was, when, moving a step forward, he abruptly, yet gently, touched her upon the shoulder, and in a well-known voice whispered—"Miss O'Neile—Catherine! I must speak to you—you will hear me? You don't know, you cannot tell, how I have waited—how I have longed for this moment. I heard Phil, a few moments since, wishing you 'God speed,' and his belief in your innocence of to-day's fearful catastrophe. Oh, tell me, say but one word that you have no knowledge of it, and I will bless you on the spot!"

"Let me pass, Mr. Herbert; I am not in the habit of having my actions watched by any one—least of all by you. Let me pass, Sir," and, with a rapid movement, she turned aside from him, but he soon overtook her again, and this time almost threw himself before her, in his endeavours to make her listen to him. "Catherine, beautiful, proud Catherine O'Neile, why did we ever meet? What destiny brought me to this spot? or why are you so cold, so indifferent to the devotion—the infatuation of a heart that lives but in you, and you alone? Had I never seen you, I could have been content to love and be happy with your cousin Geraldine, and when you are not present, I love her, and am true for the time; but your image no sooner comes across me, than all my thoughts, all my adoration, flies from her to you; and at that moment Geraldine appears to me but as a beautiful statue, that I can worship at leisure—you bewitch, enthral me, and I am powerless while you are near."

Catherine, in proud, icy tones—"Am I to understand, from your insulting language, that you have accepted my uncle's hospitality with no other motive than to

trifle with his daughter, and annoy his niece;—by thus cowardly and dishonourably professing for the first an attachment you don't feel, and by inflicting your unwelcome presence upon the second. Surely, Sir, my manner, if nothing else, should have convinced you of my sentiments. I have tried to treat you with that courtesy, which you, as a stranger, should meet with as an honoured guest in the house of an O'Neile; but now, since you force me to speak plainly, know that I bear a deadly and implacable hatred to the soil and nation of which you are a representative; and if by some cruel misfortune—for most cruel it would be to me—my heart, in spite of my reason, could be weak and degenerate enough to feel a passion for any of your race, I would annihilate it, or die in the attempt. Now, Sir, I imagine you cannot have any further wish to prolong this interview. Leave me, if you have any respect for yourself. You see I am alone, in an unhappy position, and almost friendless: at least, respect my misfortunes."

"Oh, Catherine, it is because of them that I now dare to address you. In your pride and independence I should have loved you all the same, but could never have had the courage to disclose it to you; and, far away, I would have tried to forget that I had ever beheld you."

"You are indeed weak, Mr. Herbert!"

There was a mocking irony in her voice, that fell painfully upon the young Englishman's ear, as he said—

"Catherine O'Neile, you who are strong and proud in yourself, have mercy upon me; and if you cannot and will not listen to me, do not allow your better judgment to maintain a prejudice against me, because of my nation. Believe that I can, and do sympathise with your unfortunate countrymen, and would do much in order to help them."

"Your pity, Sir, you can bestow upon those who

demand it. The cause of justice and liberty is free, and merits rather emulation than pity; we ask it not, nor would accept it at any price. We must be content to dwell amid the ruins and devastation that you cannot take from us. They are relics of the past that will speak for us in ages to come, and tell of the glory and storied fame that once was ours, before treachery and conquest laid them low."

"At least, Miss O'Neile, since I am so unhappy as to find no favour in your sight, let me—oh, let me hear the assurance of your forgiveness, for the wild impulse which led me to address you to-night?"

"Forgiveness is one of the Christian virtues, Mr. Herbert, and I am not so presumptuous as to lay any claim to it. But I will forget what you have spoken to-night,"—and then, as if speaking partly to herself, she added—"forgetfulness is an error to which we are all liable."

"Catherine, I feel your scorn more than your hate. Cannot you say one kind, one soothing word to me, before we part? I never injured you. Admiration waits not for permission to express its sentiment to the object of its choice, but declares itself from the very fulness of its passion."

"Mr. Herbert, I have said that I shall forget all that has passed between us. Now return to the O'Neile; he has more claims to your society than I have, and if you ever loved and respected him, help to comfort him now in his great sorrow, and I shall be grateful. Forget my existence." Thus speaking, she hurried from the spot.

CHAPTER XXI.

"All around him was calm, but within him commotion and conflict,
Love contending with friendship, and self with generous impulse.
To and fro in his breast his thoughts were heaving and dashing,
As in a foundering ship, with every roll of the vessel,
Washes the bitter sea, the merciless surge of the ocean!"

LONGFELLOW.

AN hour later Catherine was seated in Miss Maitland's bed-room, with her head buried in the cushions of the sofa, upon which her friend was partly reclining.

"My dearest Catherine, this silent, terrible grief will have a fatal effect upon your nerves; I know all, my dear child, and pity you from my heart. Lift up your head—look at me—listen! Believe me, there is comfort for all afflictions, even this dreadful one which has fallen upon you. You have not sinned willingly. and I know that your remorse and your conscience are fearfully at war. If you would only give words to your sorrow, and listen to me! What, still silent!"

Catherine, so often appealed to, now looked up with an impassible, stony expression, to the sweet, pale face which was bending over her, and said—

"What would you have me say, Miss Maitland?"

"Your sorrow, your contrition. It will help to relieve your heart; you know that you may confide in me."

"You say truly; I have sorrow to bear, and something greater still; but it is for another, and therefore cannot be cast off at will; were it only for myself——"

Margaret Maitland did not understand this reasoning, and began to fancy that grief was turning Catherine's brain.

After reflecting a little time, Catherine said—

"Miss Maitland, I think I can partly realise what our Lord suffered in this world."

"Catherine, do you not know that He bore the sins

of others in His own innocent person, and that He would not cast them off. We dare not, and must not, compare our weaknesses with Him who was without sin or guile."

"Which should you imagine the greater suffering,—that which one suffers for oneself or for others?"

"That which one suffers for others Catherine; because there is more uncertainty in it."

"Then you think it more sustaining?"

"Certainly, for it gives greater courage and power of endurance. If one had to have his hand cut off for his own freedom, I doubt whether he could be brought to endure such a sacrifice for himself, but might for a dear friend."

"Then how much greater must be the courage required to endure pain for an enemy!"

"No, Catherine, I cannot accept your idea upon that point, for there can be no courage where there is no love; the one feeling incites the other and upholds it. It is the love of faith which gives the martyr courage to sustain a cruel death. Then, again, love of fame and country has sent many a warrior into the midst of the battle; and the love of science and discovery has carried many a brave heart to the farthest extremity of the unknown world. Catherine, a noble, pure and devoted love can do anything."

"Do you mean to infer that courage is dependent upon love? Cannot we have a love for what is bad, as well as for what is beautiful and true?

"No, dear Catherine, that I think would be contrary to the universal law of nature. For we have, inherently, an undefined love of all that is good."

"Yet, how would that explain and account for the love that we hear and read of, as having been given to, and felt for the worst of creatures; and the fascination that vice presents, not only to the wicked, but also to the good?"

"It must be that what we once loved and believed to

be good and pure. Although we too often find out our mistake as to the worth of the object, we still, with the weakness of humanity, cling to, believe and hope that the germ of what once was good, will bloom again. And as to being fascinated by wickedness, it is unfortunately but too commonly the case."

"You admit it, then?"

"Yes, upon reflection, I cannot help doing so. It is not always the faultless and exemplary people who interest us the most, or claim our particular attention. Take, for instance, a child, who although well brought up, is not wholly free from the temptations of childhood. For instance, say that you are going to tell or read about a naughty child of its own age, and you will find that all its interest and curiosity are called into action on behalf of the delinquent; whereas, had you, on the contrary, depicted it as a model hero or heroine, the child might have accepted it as a matter of course, just as it would its dinner, its daily promenade, or anything else that custom had familiarised it with, but the tale would not fascinate or rivet its attention. And we, even of older growth, are just as prone to this weakness or defect in human nature. Look at a young man or woman who has been forbidden, it may be, to read some romance of fiction, wherein faultlessness is not the predominant characteristic of the personages represented. How they long to peruse it! Even in the celebrities of ancient and modern history, how much more is our imagination and curiosity excited in reading about fallen greatness and perverted nature, than in the exemplary and sinless life of good, harmless individuals."

Catherine's face, as she listened to Miss Maitland, lost its fixed look, and she was upon the point of speaking, when the door opened, and to her great surprise Edward Maitland appeared. She went up to him, and said—

"You see, Mr. Maitland, I have come to claim the

fulfilment of the promise you voluntarily made me some weeks ago. From this night I have forfeited my home and my friends, till it may please Providence to restore them to me again. Is it asking too much of your hospitality to let me share it for the present? I can only say one word as an excuse for the request, and that is, that I am innocent of the catastrophe of to-day."

As she spoke, an almost imperceptible and momentary lighting up of the usually stern and impassible countenance of Edward Maitland might have been observed. He took her hand, afterwards she remembered that his trembled as he did so, and said—

"Catherine, you do not require words to assure you of your welcome to our home,—innocent or not."

Then, as he saw the look of sorrow with which she withdrew her hand from his, he added—"I give you my sacred word that I believe in your innocence, as I did from the first moment. I do not ask for any confidence upon your part, were it yours to confer. I hope that we understand each other?"

And he looked into her face as if he would read what was passing in her mind. Her heart was too full for speech, and an emotion, which the sad sight of that day had failed to call up, was now visible. His belief in her innocence had touched her more than she thought it possible for anything to do after what she had gone through; for except him, all thought her guilty. He spoke again—

"I imagined, at least I hoped, you would come to my sister, and I acquainted your uncle with my confidence that you would do so. He wishes you to prove your innocence, by giving an account of all that passed from the moment that you and your little cousin left him this morning. Will you do so?"

"No."

"But do you not know, Catherine, that in remaining thus silent upon the matter, you tacitly accept the

dreadful suspicions which now rest upon you; you, so young, so formed for life and its enjoyments——"

She interrupted him—"I accept them for the time."

"To accept them now is to accept them for your whole life. All will not, as I do, believe in your guiltlessness, when you yourself are the first to countenance suspicion by silence."

She said, proudly—"I do not ask you to believe in me, Mr. Maitland. I ask none to do so, except him who has the right—my uncle; and he must believe me upon my bare word, without other explanation."

"You are an extraordinary girl, Miss O'Neile. Another, in your position, would only be too glad to have the power to come forward and free herself from such an accusation."

"It may be as you say, Sir; but I am contented to suffer for the present."

Margaret Maitland, who had been an attentive listener all this time, remarked "that in regard to Catherine's silence, she was more to be pitied than condemned, as, perhaps, her religious principles compelled her to silence."

This time Catherine did not reply, and shortly afterwards Edward Maitland retired, wishing them both good-night.

Nearly two months had now passed since the sad affair; and the short, dark days of winter had given place to the bright, hopeful spring weather. Spring, which is held by many as the most joyous and lovely of the seasons of the year, has, in its very buoyancy and gladness, a sadness and a memory, which is not welcome to all. For, with the brightness that it brings with it, we look for what it *cannot* bring—the loved and lost.

During those two months Catherine had held little or no communication with the family at the Court, beyond the daily information brought to her by her

foster-mother as to the state of Otway's health, who had been placed in a reclining position upon a spring frame-work, which had been constructed for his ease; this was arranged upon the sofa in the parlour. He never spoke, or gave any signs of recognition to those around him. His father was unremitting in his attention, and scarcely ever left his side. The doctors considered it a miracle that life remained in the poor little frame, when all the mental powers had left it. They said they had never witnessed such a case before, except that of the widow Dowlan's son, whose internal disorganisation had puzzled their skill.

The days passed slowly and heavily to Catherine in her new home, although she wore a contented brow; for why should she carry her griefs into the peaceful home that had offered her its shelter, when she had nowhere else to turn? Yet, although her days were spent in anticipating the wants and adding to the comforts of Miss Maitland, whose genial nature expanded under the influence of Catherine's soothing touch and pleasant manner, her nights were passed in stormy thoughts and misgivings for others, not for herself; and when troubled slumber at last closed her weary eyelids, her dreams were fraught with visions of despair and sadness. All these feelings she contrived to hide, or at least imagined she did. Yet there was one who took too deep an interest in her to let pass unnoticed that which, though he did not actually behold, he guessed she suffered. This was no other than Edward Maitland, whose sister had now begun to notice, that since Catherine had become a member of the family, he spent less time in his laboratory. Instead of absenting himself after dinner, as had been his custom, he now lingered in the drawing-room, under some pretence or other, seemingly buried in the perusal of a chemical problem; at least, so his sister imagined from his silence, to which she had become so accustomed, that she never, for a moment, thought of interrupting him

by any observation of hers. Had she taken the trouble to watch him from time to time, she would have been rather surprised to find that, instead of having his eyes fixed upon the pages before him, they were oftener riveted, and with no common-place attention and interest, upon Catherine's womanly figure and profile, as she sat partly within the shadow of the fire-light, either listening to, or in turn conversing with her friend, till the eyes of the latter used to close in slumber; Catherine herself, often yielding to the pleasant influence of the fire-light and the silence of the hour, also gave herself up to thought, as, with the appearance of sleep, she bent her head against the mantelpiece.

One evening, as usual, after she had been lost in a reverie, something made her suddenly open her eyes and look around, when, to her great consternation, she found those of Edward Maitland, in place of being turned to the book which he held in his hand, fixed upon her with an expression, which there was no misunderstanding. The little lamp, which was generally put beside him on the table for his use, was now extinguished. Catherine felt embarrassed at having been so stupid, as she thought, to look up so abruptly, when she might still have feigned sleep; and, strange to say, a sort of magnetic influence seemed to pass through her from Edward Maitland. She now felt that there was nothing for her to do, but break the awkwardness of the moment as best she could; so, jumping up, and approaching nearer, she asked him, in the most natural tone in the world, if she had not better relight his lamp? There was no answer to this offer, till she had taken it eagerly in her hand, and was in the act of leaving the apartment, when his deep-hushed voice arrested her—

"Catherine, don't go away! The lamp did not become extinguished of itself; for know, that I too was taken with the longing of indulging in a fire-side dream, from which you have so impulsively disturbed me.

Pray reseat yourself, and tell me a little, as to where you have been wandering for the last hour—if asking the question is not too great an indiscretion upon my part."

Edward Maitland had in his voice, when he addressed himself to any one, an intonation which commanded and riveted attention; but, this time, it conveyed more the idea of a petition than a command.

Catherine looked at him inquiringly; then replied—

"I think, Mr. Maitland, that you are asking for more than you have a right to; for you must know that thoughts belong to the thinker, and are not the property of any one that chooses to ask after them, for were that so, one would never dare to think."

"But why did you turn round, and gaze especially at me, when your eyes might have wandered to my sister, or, for that matter, to any other object in the room?"

"Why? Because—really, Sir, your question is so peculiar, so——" she muttered something—"I cannot answer it; perhaps, it was chance."

"Chance! Catherine? I did not imagine that you were one of its disciples. What is your definition of chance? I should so much like to hear it."

"Supposing I have not any?"

"In that case, and for the sake of argument, let us imagine one, and say that chance is fortunate or unfortunate, as the case may be—for there are two ways of looking at it. In this instance, I shall consider it as the latter; for, by it, I have evidently disturbed your meditations. Is it not so?"

"That may be."

"But that is not the definition, Catherine."

"I am sure, Mr. Maitland, you wish to get me into an argument, knowing, as you do, that I should have the worst of it." This last sentence was spoken in a jesting tone by Catherine.

"Then, you give it up? and quite right too. Believe me, when I tell you that there is no such thing as chance."

Catherine, in great astonishment—"No such thing as chance! Then why has it ever been introduced into language?"

"I do not deny that the word exists, but I deny that it plays the part which so many, if not all, thoughtlessly attribute to it. In the usual sense, chance does not exist in this life; our most trifling actions, as well as our most important ones, emanate from ourselves, not from chance; and they, as well as all the works of nature, are overruled by an all-governing Providence."

"I assure you, Mr. Maitland, I had no such profound ideas, if, indeed, I had any very definite ones at all, when using the word." Then, recurring to what she had just said—"I suppose you will now assure me, that there is no such thing as accident? and yet both words signify essentially the same thing."

"No, Catherine, there is a wide difference between them; for accident does really exist, although, correctly speaking, its existence is purely the result of man's ignorance."

"Then, had I employed this expression in place of the one I did, you mean to infer that it would have been correct?"

"Undoubtedly. Let us conclude that you looked at me by accident, and, at the precise moment, without any intention whatever."

"Granted, Sir; yet that will not prove that I had no intention, now that the accident has passed;" and she looked at him in a playful, defiant manner.

"That, I cannot undertake to answer; you yourself being the best judge in the case. Do you know, Miss Catherine, that I should like to make you a logician. You have no idea what a useful study it is, particularly for young ladies who are somewhat given to mystifying their expressions; besides, it assists argument so much. Formerly, logic was the sole and first principle of education."

"For men, perhaps, Sir."

"But why should not the art of reasoning form part of female education?—eh, Miss Catherine?" This was said with a malicious smile.

"Now, Mr. Maitland, I am quite sure that you are playing upon my credulity; for you know that a woman can accomplish almost anything, with the exception of reasoning."

"No doubt you mean by that, that she has other, or her own codes, and is lawgiver on the subject. Yes, I think I have heard that a woman is a little deficient that way; although I believe she is not averse to a little sophistry—a style of reasoning with which she is generally conversant."

"Indeed, Sir, I think sophistry is one of the greatest evils which can corrupt society, and no art is greater than that which enables us to detect and expose it."

"You are very bitter upon sophists and sophistry, Miss Catherine; yet, do you know that one of your own sex—a celebrated Grecian, whose talent, grace, and eloquence gave her an almost miraculous power over the hearts and minds of the greatest men of that period——was a sophist?" Observing his fair auditor look at him in an inquiring manner, he added—"It is quite possible you may have forgotten your ancient history. I believe most young ladies, after they have put aside their books, generally put away with them a great deal of their school-day knowledge. Is it not, perhaps, the case with you, or do you make an exception to the rule?"

Catherine, rather pertly—"There would be no rule in the case at all, were there no exception."

The eyes of Edward Maitland glanced approvingly, although his mouth wore its usual imperturbable expression, at Catherine's answer.

"And, with all due regard to you, Mr. Maitland, I beg to say that I have not forgotten my ancient history; the celebrity to whom you have alluded, was, if I mistake not, Aspasia. I am sorry for her unhappy

country's sake, to say she made a very bad use of her eloquence; for its baneful influence was felt to the detriment both of private and public affairs."

"Do you know, Miss Catherine, I don't admire your women philosophers; for I am sure we could not get on with them: they generally allow their own enthusiastic and high-flown notions to overrule their better judgment. Don't you agree with me?"

"I, for one, should be sorry to persuade you to admire them, Sir?"

"Persuade!" and his face brightened at the mere idea. "What a charming intonation! Do you know that the Greeks classed Persuasion among the deities, and so immortalised her for ever?"

"I believe we were speaking of philosophers, not deities, Mr. Maitland. And allow me to suggest to you, Sir—that is, if you in your turn have not quite renounced your classic lore—that there were schools of philosophy in Greece, whose disciples were women, and only women; and who proved themselves in every way worthy of the vocation that they had chosen."

She glanced at him slyly for a moment; but feeling she was standing upon firm ground, and without giving him time to reply, she continued—

"And, if I do not greatly err, I believe it was a woman who first solved a problem in Euclid. So you see, Sir, that I will not allow you to have your own way, and lord it over us of the weaker sex, as you, in your mightiness, deem us; true, our organisation may be somewhat frail in contrast to your own, yet our minds are oftener of stronger material than you imagine, and——"

He interrupted her before she could finish her sentence.

"Spare me—be merciful in your strength, Miss Catherine! don't you see that you have conquered? I

yield to you;" and he crossed his arms with a mock air of submission.

"Now you are the strongest, Sir; for you yield to me, who am only a weak woman."

"If those are your sentiments, Catherine, I have hopes of your even becoming a reasoner."

"That may be possible, too, so long as you don't try to convince me against my will."

"Ah! the old theory. Then I give it up."

"Indeed, Sir, that is a fair admission that you have lost, although you are, as you yourself admit, one of the disciples of the logician school. But I am not going to be hard upon a fallen foe; your punishment shall be, that you now allow me to relight your lamp, so as to enable you to continue your research 'down among the dead men'—of whom your book seems redolent, to judge from its musty, fusty appearance—until your sister awakens from her siesta. I, in the meantime, must go up-stairs, and look out some work for my evening's employment."

So saying, and after having trimmed his lamp, and placed it beside him, Catherine stole over on tiptoe to see if her friend still slept, which being the case, she withdrew, leaving Edward Maitland, as she imagined, to the interest of his book.

The door had no sooner closed upon her, than he stood up, and hastily shutting the book, went over to the mantelpiece, and leant his head down upon it, as if sad and weary. The image of a bright form, whose presence ever caused a quicker pulsation of his heart, and an enjoyment of things which before had no interest for him, now presented itself to his mind; the very rustle of her dress, the sound of her voice, even the hope and longing to behold her, brought a pleasant sensation with it, which only those who have felt the like can define or understand.

After some time he raised his head, and walking over to the table, took up a book, which he had remarked

Catherine had been reading; and turning over the pages in an inquiring, eager manner, he found one of them carefully turned down, as if to mark something which the reader of the book would fain remember. He unfolded it, when his attention was attracted by these lines—

"Cowards die many times before their deaths;
The valiant never taste of death but once.
Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,
It seems to me most strange that men should fear!
Seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come."

SHAKESPEARE.

He repeated them to himself, as he went over to the window, and drawing back the curtain, looked out, but all was darkness. The wind from the sea was now sweeping against the house, and over the chords of an Eolian harp, that had been placed in a neighbouring tree; its wild, sad cadences swelled and vibrated like the lament of a wandering, weary spirit, asking for peace and rest, but finding none.

Strange coincidence! such as frequently happens in life without our being aware of it. Catherine had no sooner reached her own room up-stairs, than she too, after lighting the candle, drew near to the window, and leant her face against the smooth, cold glass, while her thoughts wandered far, far away across the stormy main, whose murmurs reached her ears where she stood. Then drawing from the bosom of her dress a narrow black ribbon, from which an old-fashioned ring was suspended, she gazed upon it long and earnestly, and then pressed it to her lips; in fancy her thoughts went back to the days that could never come again.

Once more the drawing-room door was softly opened, and Catherine entered the room, unconscious of Edward Maitland being still there; going over to the sofa, she arrived just in time to see her friend open her eyes and sit up. Catherine bent towards her, and kissed

her. The figure at the window, as he watched her do so, started abruptly, and came towards the light; then, with apparent indifference, taking up his lamp, he left the apartment without saying a word.

CHAPTER XXII.

"'Must I relinquish it all?' he cried with a wild lamentation;
'Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope, the illusion?
Was it for this I have loved, and waited, and worshipped in silence?
Was it for this I have followed the flying feet and the shadow?
Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion;
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.'
Over him rushed, like a wind that is keen, and cold, and relentless,
Thoughts of what might have been, and the weight and woe of his errand;
All the dreams that had faded, and all the hopes that had vanished;
All his life, henceforth, a dreary and tenantless mansion,
Haunted by vain regrets, and pallid, sorrowful faces."

LONGFELLOW.

CATHERINE was returning late one evening, after having been enjoying one of her long, solitary rambles, when to her surprise she was overtaken by Edward Maitland, who looked anxious and alarmed at her having remained out so late. At first she did not pay any attention to his manner, and they both walked on in silence, till, stopping abruptly, he said—

"Catherine, have you ever known what it was to live upon the breath of another being, and from whom to part would be misery?"

For the first time since they met, Catherine looked at him, and perceived that his face was pale, and his manner excited. He waited for her reply.

"What am I to understand, by this strange and unexpected question, Mr. Maitland?"

"Catherine, can you not understand? do you not see, and feel, that for months I have loved you?—loved

you as only men of my years and character can love. Farther concealment would be worse than the truth, which I have vainly endeavoured to withhold from you. Your protracted stay this evening, and my anxiety and longing for your return, have overcome my prudence, and the secret is mine no longer."

She was about to interrupt, but he continued—

"Hear me, Catherine! I love you for yourself! I have no ties, but Margaret, and she loves you. You are friendless, homeless, so young, so interesting, and, may I say it, so unhappy. Oh, Catherine! let me share your griefs, and, by so doing, lessen them, or at least render them less bitter. My Catherine! what happiness to place you beyond the trials and endless stings of fickle fortune, now, above all, when you stand so much in need of a protector. I would cherish, watch over you, live for you; aye, be a better and another man with you by my side. Catherine, you do not know, you cannot dream what my life has been; although outwardly so calm and indifferent to all things, I have had a dreadful sorrow, which I have carefully hidden within my heart. No, not even Margaret, whom I love and esteem, has any idea of the plaything fortune has made of me. And you are so like—so unspeakably like—one who loved me once, and would have been mine, if right were might. But she deceived me, and her deception caused the unhappiness, not only of herself alone, but of those who came within her influence. She had your face and form; the same free spirit, the same noble heart; yet one thing she wanted, which you possess so fully—abnegation of self; with all her intrinsic qualities, she could not make the smallest sacrifice for others. Yet I loved her to the last, and I love her still in you! When she became dead to me, by her own act, I fled my home and my country, and became a wanderer. My nature, which had hitherto been believing and yielding, became incredulous and hard. All inward, as well as outward, show of religion,

seemed to me but as a cloak for falsehood, for she whom I worshipped had allowed herself to be first guided, and afterwards deceived, by a priest, into perpetrating an unjust act, and one unworthy of the true and disinterested affection which she professed towards me. My wounded pride felt too deeply injured to interfere with them; I could at the last moment, as she too well knew and dreaded, have prevented her taking a false vow; but that morning, as she was leaving the church, after the ceremony, unnoticed by all but herself, I appeared before her, when she thought and hoped I was far from the spot. I turned, and, with an expression of pity and contempt, left her, and as I did so, she fell fainting into the arms of those around. Her sudden indisposition was attributed to the closeness of the weather, and to the crowded chapel. I took with me one satisfaction as I went away, that was the assurance, which her gaze at me but too truly confirmed, that I was still beloved.

"How often since then has my heart reproached me for my apparent cruelty! yet I was helpless to save her or myself—she had gone too far!

"When next we met, after an interval of many, many years, she was on her dying bed; and had sent to ask my forgiveness for the wrong she had committed against me. She had heard of the sad life I had passed since that fatal day, and made me promise to return to my faith, and seek the consolations which my Church could give. She then told me that she had acquainted her husband, some time before her illness, with her previous engagement to me, and with her deceit in the affair. A few months before seeing her for the last time, my eldest brother died suddenly, leaving me heir to the property. At the time that her perfidy drove me away, I was only twenty-one, and the youngest of three brothers. She was no stranger to you, Catherine;" and he bent forward, and whispered a well-known name in her ear, which upon hearing, made her start and exclaim—

"My aunt, O'Neile!"

"You know, Catherine, even with your experience of me, what a misanthrope I am. But perhaps you don't know that social ties, and all that makes home dear and attractive, has been a sealed book to me; although, for my sister's peace of mind, I have often assumed a character which is not mine. When the sorrowful event, which closed upon her happiness in this world, summoned me back to the home I had left, in order to conceal the shadows and *ennui* that still clung to me, I gave myself up to an occupation to which I devoted most of my time and energies, that I might blind her, and have an excuse for being alone; as I was no companion for her when in my wayward moods, and cynical thoughts of mankind. What bitter hours have I not passed in that laboratory, when she believed that science had more attractions for me than her society! till a new light, a bright presence of youth and sympathy, came across my path in your form. Three years have passed—how time flies! and fly it will, either in joy or sorrow—since you first came like a sunbeam, or a thunder-cloud, and awoke me from the state of apathy into which I had fallen. How I watched you, and learnt to read from your looks alone, the heart which your actions and remarks often belied! In your hours of reverie, when you thought no one was near, and when you seemed lost to all around, an expression of unutterable unhappiness would pass over your countenance; then how I longed, how I wished for the right and privilege to share your sorrow!"

Upon hearing this Catherine started, and exclaimed, with astonishment and indignation—

"Was that honourable, Sir, to follow me like a spy, and watch my every movement, almost my every thought? you, whom I believed to be above such conduct? Shame!"

"I am making a clear confession, Catherine, although by so doing, I may for the moment lose your esteem.

You are wrong when you imagine that I was a spy upon your actions; Fate seemed to bring me near to you. When I began to wander about, I never thought of crossing your path, though long afterwards the longing would arise in my heart that I might meet you, or come near the place which your presence seemed to hallow. I had now, after an aimless existence of more than twenty years, an object to promote my best and truest interests, and in part remove the despondency that was weighing so heavily upon me. Catherine! she who can inspire and call forth such a change, must possess a germ—a saving influence in herself. I, whom till then, not anything seemed to have power to impress—I, who have seen and mixed in all phases of life, and with all kinds of people——" He paused a moment, then continued—"I have now come to a point in my confession, which I know will arouse all your indignation; and yet I must tell you. That night, in Denis Connelly's cabin, I saw you watch beside the dying child. Unseen by you, I managed to remain unobserved amid the crowd, who, out of sympathy or curiosity, had congregated to watch the breath pass away from the little suffering body. I also watched your uncle's guest and kinsman, at first with a feeling of jealousy, as I saw his too expressive glances of admiration follow your every movement; and then with a feeling of pity, as I noticed your contemptuous reception of his proffered kindness; as if an Irish girl, and an O'Neile, were not safe where Erin's skies and Erin's sons surrounded her. When you left that night, I followed you——"

Catherine tapped quickly and impatiently with her foot upon the ground, and tried to speak, but the words died upon her lips, as she looked upon the man, always so calm and indifferent, but who was now speaking with eager and passionate accents.

"Yes, I followed, and saw, as Denis Connelly quitted you, that you remained undecided, till, looking upwards,

the falling star attracted your attention. In the uncertain light I could not see your face distinctly, yet my heart told me that your wish accompanied its downward course. Then how much I desired that my soul's aspirations could go with, and unite themselves to yours! I saw you go into the little chapel; and, actuated by an insurmountable feeling, I contrived to enter it from the other side, by a small aperture. When you prostrated yourself before the statue, and addressed it in the anguish and bitterness of your heart, I remembered *her* who had deceived me, and how she had erred through too much reliance and faith in images; and an irresistible desire rose in my mind to save you, if possible, from such false comfort as they could afford."

He paused to draw breath, while Catherine, with cheeks glowing with indignation and pride, said, in bitter tones—

"I will hear no more! leave me, Mr. Maitland; with deep regret I am compelled to say, that the confession is truly worthy of the confessor. You, to whom I looked as to a superior being, to think, to know that you could have been guilty of this!—oh, it is too much!"

"Catherine, you must pardon me, and not regard this in any other light than the true one." There was reproach in his accents as he added—"Believe me when I assure you that I had your welfare at heart, and no other motive. I wanted to satisfy myself, and for that purpose wished to see how far your credulity would lead you."

"Really, Sir, I don't know how I shall reward this particular, and I may add important, interest, that by your own avowal, you have evidently taken in my slightest actions. But continue, I have now listened so far that I can hear the end." She drew herself up, looking at him fixedly and contemptuously.

"I was enabled, by means of a stool placed behind the figure of the Virgin, to raise myself upon a level with it; and it was my lips which softly whispered

those words, the effect of which I did not at the time foresee. The next moment what would I not have given to have recalled them! I crept down noiselessly, and found you extended insensible upon the ground before the cold, white marble, whose aid you had but just invoked. I called you by your name, but in vain; then, forgetful of the part I was acting, and of your indignation and surprise should you awake and discover me—there are moments when one is reckless of all consequences—I rushed out to try and procure some water to sprinkle your face, but returned after a vain search. I then remembered that I always carried tincture of myrrh about with me, which I sometimes employed in my chemical operations; and, pouring out one or two drops upon a handkerchief, I applied it to your nostrils. In a short time I saw that you were slowly returning to consciouness; then placing you against the base of the statue, I withdrew to the outside, but remained quite close to the entrance, so as to assure myself of your perfect recovery before leaving you alone at that silent hour of the morning; and in the darkness, I watched your astonishment as you sat up and looked around. How my heart reproached me, again and again, as I noted the deadly pallor of your face, and its awe-stricken expression! By a powerful control over myself, I turned from you, and slowly left the spot, yet stopped at intervals, and looked towards the little chapel. As you left it, I silently and watchfully followed, till I saw you safely within the gates of the park."

The expression of Catherine's face changed as she listened to this recital; a soft look came over it, in pity for the weakness, passion, and devotedness of the heart which thus unveiled itself to her. That heart, which to others was an enigma, she could now read; and she, who had awakened it to tenderness, had not one feeling of affection to give in return,—nothing but pity, and a sorrowful regret for the misery she must inflict, in destroying whatever hope had arisen in the man before

her. After a long pause, in which each looked far away from the other, he continued, in a more assured tone, and with a prouder bearing, because Catherine alone was the heroine of his speech—

"You remember the night which followed? as I ever shall your brave and noble devotedness, and forgetfulness of self. When I returned, and heard the account related to me by the police-sergeant, my heart palpitated with emotion, not at the loss which I might have suffered, but with pride and delight to know that you had been the preserver of mine,—that in itself was a tie, a link that would bind us more closely — something which did not exist before. Could any voice have whispered to me that night, as I rode quietly home, my thoughts full of your image, that you were at that moment exposed to the violence of those ruffians, I don't know how time or space would have passed with me till I reached home. I am sure had the robbers come in contact with you——! But let me not think of it!"

Catherine interrupted him, and said, slowly and coldly—"Do not mistake—they did, or rather, I came in contact with them."

She now saw that it was time for her to speak plainly, therefore she continued—"And I may say, of my own free-will too, for when I acquaint you, as I must, that I secreted the chief of the band, and afterwards helped him to escape, I imagine that such a confession will change your exalted opinion of my poor merits."

"Catherine!" was all he could say.

"Yes, I, at his instigation, contrived to hide him within the carved cabinet which is in the drawing-room."

"Ah, I see!"—and the cloud, that a moment before had settled itself upon his face, now cleared away—"I understand your goodness of heart, even to such as those, when they appealed to it."

"Say, rather, my weakness of heart, Sir," she said, in depreciating tones, and for the moment forgetting

the secret which she had not thought of disclosing—"for it was weakness!"—this she repeated as if talking to herself—"for know, Mr. Maitland, that he whom I assisted, was the friend and companion I had loved from childhood."

Catherine was a long time speaking these words, while the hitherto pale face now flushed crimson, and the eyes sought the ground, as if they (even in the uncertain light which was now throwing its shadow upon all around) feared to encounter the glance of him, whom she felt this acknowledgment would precipitate from heaven to earth.

Edward Maitland advanced a step, and tried to seize her hand, but she drew it quickly away. He came closer to her, and, bending forward, endeavoured to look into the averted face, while he said, in a strange voice—

"Catherine, what mean those words? speak more plainly, and if you have any pity in you, do not hesitate; you see I cannot bear this suspense any longer." He had taken off his hat, and now raised his hand to his forehead, as if to still its throbbing.

"Can it be possible, Mr. Maitland, that you never knew—never guessed the secret of my life—of my actions? Must I speak more plainly, and lay the whole terrible truth before you?"

She hesitated, as if waiting for a reply, but he remained silent.

"Know, then, that I have loved, and still love, my cousin, Pierce O'Neile, and that we are betrothed."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at their feet, he to whom this disclosure was made, could not have started back more suddenly, as he uttered the exclamation—

"Pierce O'Neile!" He repeated the name with sorrowful and bitter emphasis. "It wanted but that name, and the confirmation it brings with it, to tell me all I would know. For the second time in my life it comes between me and happiness—the happiness of a riper, steadier growth—a happiness which I, visionary

that I have been, imagined grew out of itself, and not out of the dreadful false past, that turned my youth into bitterness, and caused disbelief of all that was good or ennobling in human nature. All might have been retrieved, for youth is a phœnix which can cast off the worst part of itself, and rise up, from the ashes of its deceived aspirations and dreams, to better things. It might have been thus with me, but all that is past now; for in the autumn of my days, what can give me back the hopes, the wishes, the resolves, that this one short moment in my life's span has taken from me? *Her* son, too!" and he moved away from the spot, regardless of Catherine's presence.

All her sympathies were now awakened as she looked upon the suffering man, and running up and bending before him, she sought to calm and appease the evil spirit that was struggling within.

"Oh, Mr. Maitland, hear me! Do not condemn Pierce O'Neile—do not judge him because of the past. If you knew how he has suffered, what he has gone through;—how he had been disowned, disinherited, and almost forgotten by all but me;—left, too, to his own resources and wild untutored ways by his mother, who idolised him, but whose weak love encouraged and concealed all his unrestrained youthful follies;—surely you would not be so bitter in your denunciation. Oh, think, there is much to forgive in him, for it may be truly said, 'that he has been more sinned against than sinning.' And now he is far away, fighting in the cause of liberty and justice; but he will yet return, and redeem the sad past, which will then seem as a storm which has cleared away, after having caused, it is true, much destruction in its passage, yet once over, a clearer, purer, and fresher atmosphere results from it. His baser self he has left behind, his better he has taken with him. Believe me, that he is not so unworthy as you deem. He and I may never meet again on earth, yet I will not be false to his memory—to the one steadfast feeling

of my life; for if I cannot be his, I will never be to another what I would have been to him. It may be, that I shall remain alone to lament and regret him, for grief does not always kill. In the years which are before me one consolation will always be mine, that is—in retirement and meditation to remember him and you.

"You have suffered much; believe me that I esteem, that I honour, and that I shall ever think of you as my best friend. Friendship, you know, has its claims as well as love, and perhaps the higher and nobler, and more disinterested of the two, is the former, because it is more rare. Princes and rulers inspire, and even command, love, but they seldom or ever enjoy friendship, which doubles joy and lessens sorrow."

He turned, as he addressed her—"Miss O'Neile, you speak of what you do not comprehend. Friendship may be all you represent, yet it is but a shadow, which the glowing sunshine of love effaces and ignores. Love is God's first and best blessing given to man, and there can be no greater when we regard it as it was, in its first pure sense, before man's wickedness of heart perverted it, and lowered it to his own nature. And thus does it appear to us when we seek to obtain, and think we possess it.

"But I only speak in vain. How well and eloquently you can plead for him! Does he know how blest he is? Answer me one question, Catherine O'Neile—Should fate, should time, release you from your vow, would you then look favourably upon my suit?"

"There is nothing but death can release me in the manner you mean; and, according to what I believe, that would only make the tie more binding. But let us be friends, firm, fast friends"—and she put out her hand—"wherever or however divided we may become; and think the best of him, if not for his sake, at least for mine. Rest assured, Mr. Maitland, that if it were

given to all of us, to know each other thoroughly in mind and heart, we should have much to forgive, to forget, to pity, and to excuse."

As she finished speaking, she turned quickly from him and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Again—again—and oft again—my love!
If there be life below and hope above,
He will return,— but now the moments bring
The time of parting with redoubled wing:
The why—the where—what boots it now to tell?
Since all must end in that wild word—farewell!
For in that word, that fatal word, howe'er
We promise, hope, believe, there breathes despair."

BYRON.

ON the outskirts of the cathedral town of T——, there stood, at the time in which we write, a convent, encircled by a large garden, and enclosed by a thick high wall. There was nothing remarkable but this in the town to attract public attention, and it stood solemn and solitary, placed apart from the rest of the busy, active community, who passed, re-passed and fomented around it in their daily motions.

Let us look within those walls, and discover what their impassibility and solidity conceals from our mundane sight.

A large and heavy square stone building rises in the middle of this enclosure, the long, narrow windows of which are protected by massive iron bars, forming over them a sort of trellis-work. The principal entrance looks into a spacious, paved court; in the centre is erected an alarm-bell, intended to be used to call the nuns to their several duties. The other three views of the convent look out upon the garden; round one side

of it is a stone arcade, at the end of which there are thin wire gratings; when slipped back these disclose to view innumerable rows of leaden coffins. Those of a past century are uncovered, and placed in a raised position, so as to expose to view the mouldering bones of many a defunct nun, who had lived, loved, suffered, thought, sinned and repented, it might have been, ages before. The coffins of more recent date were still closed up. In the long summer evenings this arcade was the principal resort of the sisterhood, and here they were to be found walking up and down, some apparently lost in meditation, while others were telling their beads, ever reminded in the contemplation before them, of the vanity and nothingness of this world, and the inutility of human wishes. Upon the other side of this long arcade, were arranged, with much taste, many flower-beds and flowering shrubs, whose perfumes were wafted to and fro, over the dust of the holy dead; around the archways and pillars, hung wild ivy and creeping passion-flowers, which bloomed and died year after year, amid the unchanging scene.

We will now take a peep into the interior of the convent. Upon entering, one is struck by the innumerable vaulted passages, the centre and principal one being in the shape of a cross; upon one side is the reception-chamber, where all visitors are received, and accompanied hither and thither by a lay-sister. On the opposite side of this passage is a large refectory, tables and benches being placed down it and across it. The cells are all situated in the upper part of the building, and connected by a descending passage with the choir of the chapel; they are very narrow, and bereft of all comfort,—a bed of the humblest description and a *priedieu*, being the only necessaries allowed; in each cell is a long narrow window, looking out upon the garden, and at the entrance is placed a holy-water fount.

Two years had now passed since the events last narrated,

In the before-mentioned town of T——, there was observable on this particular evening, an unusual bustle and excitement. It was seven o'clock, and the bells of the convent chapel were summoning the elect, the curious, and the idle, to look upon the novice who, with to-morrow's dawn, was to bid farewell to all the pomps and vanities of this world. At the ceremony of this night, all the attractions of the Roman Church were to be brought forward, so as to render brilliant the completion of the sacrifice; these pomps, indeed, contributed in no slight measure to give the votarist that necessary courage and immolation of self, that otherwise might be difficult to attain. Yes, countless numbers had assembled there to approve, censure, pity, or admire the fortitude with which youth and beauty are endowed, when by thus renouncing the world, and all that it contains most dear, she imagines that she will be more fit for heaven, towards which she will henceforth look as a right. And why? It may be, because this earth has ceased to offer to her what most she prized; or perhaps its temptations and trials were greater and more difficult to bear, than the voluntary vow which she is now about to pronounce; or she may think, that dead to the world, she can give all her thoughts and best aspirations to Heaven. In her enthusiasm, she deceives herself and others, and worse still, in her mistaken fortitude, she flies from the state of life in which Providence has placed her; she doubts her own strength of purpose, forgetting, in her blindness of heart, that mortals were placed in this world, not to fly its temptations, but rather to meet and resist them. God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, and His protection is sufficient for all of us. If we refuse to battle with temptation, we are not true disciples of Him who Himself endured it, and who went through all the snares of this world; had He avoided them, His sacrifice would have been incomplete.

As is usual upon such occasions, the convent gates

were thrown open to the public. The large chapel was already full, while a crush of eager faces was to be seen crowding and struggling outside, the better to look into the brilliantly-lighted aisle.

Nine o'clock now strikes, and the magnificent organ sends out its swelling and thrilling thunders in "Deus Magnus," which is taken up at intervals by the clear, fresh voices of the nuns and novices, who, in their accustomed place in the organ gallery, can see, without being seen, for a high bronze railing shuts them out from the public gaze. The high altar is blazing in light, and redolent with the perfume of incense. The Bishop, who is to perform the ceremony, sits in his robes of state, surrounded by other dignitaries of the Church. A long, broad grating at one side of the altar now slides back, when the Lady Abbess, accompanied by the novice, who is dressed in bridal robes, advances, and is followed by relatives and friends, who, upon this last evening, have the privilege of being near her.

She is led forward by the Superior, and approaches the steps of the altar, upon one of which she kneels in silent and deep devotion. It is her bridal eve, her reception—for to-morrow's dawn will see her deprived of all her gay apparel.

The Bishop now comes forward, and, making the sign of the cross, asks her in clear, vibrating tones, that resound through the lofty aisles, the usual questions, which she answers aloud, so that all present may hear that there is no compulsion. Now, for a few moments, let us contemplate the novice, as she turns to the assembled multitude, while the Bishop ascends the pulpit, to preach upon the momentous event; truly, the subject before him should call forth all his most brilliant eloquence.

The figure of the novice is very graceful, and it is rendered doubly so by the folds of long, white lustreless silk which fall around her. On her head is a wreath of orange-blossoms, falling from which may be seen a flow-

ing lace veil, now and then fluttering with each movement of the wearer, and disclosing through it the shining masses of black hair,—alas! that to-morrow they must fall under the remorseless steel. The countenance is of marble whiteness, yet its expression is calm, almost spiritualised, for a smile lights it with a strange beauty. Indeed, the peculiar charm of the face lay in the smile; without this, it might not have been deemed attractive, as the features were anything but regular or beautiful, unless we except the eyes, which were large, dark, and lustrous. The reader will doubtless have recognised our heroine, Catherine O'Neile; for she it was who stood there to undergo the gaze of hundreds, many of whom loved and admired her, and others who wondered, but could not understand, why she was leaving that world, which should have been so bright to her.

The Bishop proceeded in his discourse, setting forth the hopes and attractions that chain youth to this life; "for instance, the young girl before them, in the bloom of her existence, now willingly gives up all that most she prizes and loves, forsakes home, kindred, friends, the world and its fascinations, the beauty of God's works, and for what? for the cloister, which can only offer her in return—looking at it in a worldly point of view—solitude, monotony, and mortification of the flesh in their hardest and most trying forms;—to speak in plainer terms, a living tomb, which shuts her out from all communication with the outward world. Never again shall the smiles of friends look down upon her, or their caresses encircle her—never again can the voice of love summon her by its appeal, —no, nor can the sunshine of heaven, nor the free, joyous voice of nature be with her, except in the few yards of ground out yonder (he pointed in the direction of the convent garden). All, all that makes this life blessed, she discards for ever!" There was a pause, which was filled up by the sobs and stifled cries of

the listening multitude, while she who inspired this affecting demonstration, sat there calm and collected, with her eyes fixed upon those of the preacher. She had fully realised his words—aye, hundreds of times, in imagination and spirit, and could now calmly hear them without regret or fear.

The Bishop continued his discourse—"I have shown you but the outer cloud; now we will pass beneath it, and look upon the other side. What does she behold there to reward her for the temporary sacrifice? The sunshine, which it but hides; for she exchanges the communion of the outward world, for communion with God alone, who can strengthen and bring her nearer to Himself. Instead of the smiles and caresses of all who are dear to her, she feels the love of Him who is unchangeable; for the beauties of this world, which unfold only as a shadow of the loveliness of another, she sees beyond, with the eyes of faith, a fairer, purer world. Through the long vista that stretches out before her—the narrow and thorny way—there is that paradise, which she hopes and longs for, and shall obtain, if she has but the courage to follow after and seek it. Life is but a dream at the best, and at its end, yes, at that supreme moment, how think you she will feel as she looks back upon all that has been given up? Words cannot—imagination cannot—realise such a moment."

He ceased speaking, and the organ once more sent out its inspiring sounds, while all eyes were now directed towards the altar, where Catherine still knelt in prayer. The grand "Dei Profundis" was then sung, she herself joining in the responses. This concluded, her friends approached to take leave till the morrow, when they would, for the last time, look upon her. Catherine, according to the custom of the order that she belonged to, must remain alone in the chapel, fasting and praying, till the hour came for her final vow to be offered.

By degrees the chapel began to be empty, till only a

few stragglers here and there groped their way about. At last, they too have gone, and Catherine is now alone in the deserted church. The lights have been extinguished, and only two long candles upon the altar shed their feeble glimmer around, rendering the darkness more distinct, and throwing fantastic shadows down the long aisles and around the gothic pillars. There kneels that one solitary form, with her beating human heart, as we shall see, despite of all that prayer and seclusion had done to console her. Do no other thoughts, but those sacred to the life upon whose threshold she now stands, intrude upon her? Oh, human, sinful, poor, weak heart, even in the strongest mortal! What can you do? how drive out the passing form, and imaginings of what has, and might have been? The shadow is there, the shadow brought by sin into the world, for she sighs as she kneels—sighs, it may be, in memory of her unworthiness.

Yet, what strange fascination is upon her now, as she stands up and gazes around? The calm, peaceful look of some moments before has passed from her countenance, and a restlessness has come over her. She advances a few steps so as to assure herself of the reality of the present hour; then, as her gaze falls upon her rich apparel, a shudder passes through her—she places her hand upon her heart, as if to still its beating, while she fixes her eyes with a half-terrified, half-incredulous glance into the empty space around, as though she there saw something visible to her mind's eye alone. Her breath comes and goes with painful rapidity; and for a moment the dead silence is disturbed by the striking of the convent bell, as it chimes out, clear and sharp, the midnight hour. It ceases, and all is again silent, when suddenly a low sound strikes upon her ear, at first at intervals, and rather indistinctly, as if some one were descending the gallery; then she hears the clang of steel along the stone pavement of the central aisle.

A moment more, and a tall, dark figure rises, as it were, out of the obscurity, and rapidly approaches till within a few yards of her. Another moment passes —a moment of awful stillness—when, with a sudden bound, it rushes forward and clasps her in its embrace; she has watched it coming, yet has only power, at the instant in which it clasps her, to utter the name —"Pierce!" and falls into the outstretched arms of her lover.

He looks around as if in search of something; then lifting her in his arms, wraps his cloak round her, and walks rapidly down the aisle with his precious burden; he reaches the outer door, which happened to be locked from within; with one powerful effort he turns the ponderous key, and the next moment finds himself in the court-yard. The great difficulty now is, to gain the open street; for himself he entertains no fear, as he can easily account for his presence by saying that he was locked up in the chapel; but how account for the still lifeless figure that he clasps? She would be recognised, and what a recognition!—a novice, on the eve of taking her vow, escaping from the convent, in company with a strange man! why, it would be sacrilege in its worst form. As he was thus debating in his own mind, he heard steps approaching, and saw the tall, dark figure of a man before him. He tries to rush past, but the man has seen the flowing robes peep out from beneath the cloak. Pierce, as he reaches the lodge, desires, in commanding tones, the porter to open the gate, explaining, meanwhile, how he chanced to be locked-up in the church, and that his companion had fainted through fright. The porter, who sees nothing to doubt in this story, is just on the point of complying with his command, when the muffled figure, that had followed closely, passes between them, and placing his hand upon Pierce's shoulder, says, as he throws back the mantle, disclosing his priestly garments—"Forbear! Thank Heaven, I have come opportunely to pre-

vent this sacrilege. Who, and what are you? Who is he that dares to violate this sancturay, with the intention of carrying off one of its votarists? As he spoke, he contrived to pull back the cloak that partly enveloped Catherine, when, by the light of the lamp hanging over the gateway, he sees the white face unconsciously leaning against the breast of the young man, who clasps her tightly to him, her dress and veil in disorder, and the long dishevelled hair flowing over her. A cry of rage and amazement is uttered by the priest as he identifies her, and he exclaims—

"Put down your holy burden; or, by all that's sacred, I will alarm the whole convent! Put her down, I say!"

He looked terrible in his wrath, while the vehemence of his manner almost threatened to vent itself in some way or other upon whoever came nearest to him. At this moment some lay-sisters arrived on the spot; horrified, and scarcely believing what they witnessed, they came to the assistance of the priest. Pierce resisted all their efforts, till the continued movement, and the sound of the different voices, began to recall Catherine to her senses. She slowly opened her eyes, and tried to stand up; then, after some seconds, the recollection of the last few moments came back to her, and gazing wildly around—Pierce's arm the meantime still encircling her—her glance fell upon the dress and face of the priest who had seized hold of her. An exclamation escaped her, as she recognised in him Father Maguire, the friend and confessor of the family. The priest looked at her menacingly, while he thus addressed her—

"Catherine O'Neile! I command you to return with me instantly to the chapel, and to tell me by what right that man there tries to detain you!"

As he finished speaking, he shook her arm in a severe manner. The poor girl looked bewildered from one to the other, yet it was to her cousin that she involun-

tarily clung. The priest began to mutter something aloud in the Latin tongue, at the same time making the sign of the cross. Catherine, as if suddenly electrified, tried, in great excitement, to extricate herself from her cousin's embrace, but he held her fast, which increased the rage of Father Maguire; who, turning to one of the lay-sisters standing near him, whispered something to her, and she quickly disappeared. Then, once more making an effort to disengage Catherine, he commanded her, if she did not wish him to call down the anathemas of the Church upon both of them, to free herself from the protection of that man, and to disclose who he was, so that proper measures might be taken to bring him to account for the dreadful crime that he had been on the point of perpetrating, when Providence had specially interfered to prevent it. Catherine, as she listened to the menaces of the priest, had freed herself from Pierce's arms, who became passive when he saw that she herself wished it; still she hesitated to disclose who he was, but, with a woman's instinct and fear, began to intercede for him, that he might be permitted to take his departure unmolested and unquestioned. However, the priest was obdurate, and would listen to no reasoning. Catherine, for the moment forgetting Father Maguire and his power over her, drew near to Pierce, and said to the priest, in a calm tone, while she looked him full in the face—

"How far will your power extend over me, if I now, of my own free will, leave this convent? for you know that I am perfectly at liberty to do so if I choose; no vow has as yet passed my lips—I am still but a novice."

Father Maguire looked at her in amazement, as if he could scarcely believe what he heard. Turning round, he raised his arm, and, in severe tones, gave the command to ring the alarm-bell; then, looking towards Catherine, he slowly raised his outstretched arms over her, while his lips began to move. An awful fear

took possession of her, and throwing herself upon her knees before him, she said beseechingly—

"Do with me what you will, but save him!" She pointed to Pierce, who now rushed between the priest and his intended victim, exclaiming—

"Lay but a hand upon her, and, by the heaven above us, I strike! for not even your sacred professsion can protect you!"

As he spoke he threw off his heavy cloak, disclosing to view the brilliant uniform of one of the Spanish Guards, while his uplifted sword glittered in the light. At that moment the convent bells sent out a shrill peal of alarm; when, quick as thought, strange figures of men and women were seen rushing to and fro. The priest gave a triumphant glance at the tall figure before him, while he held Catherine back. Pierce now perceived that any further resistance would be useless, and, putting back his sword, he approached the priest, and bending down towards his ear, said—

"If I tell you who I am, will that suffice to let me pass?"

The priest's sole answer was an incredulous look, nothing more.

"You don't appear to see the necessity of answering me, so I will spare you any further questioning."

Then, baring his head, and pushing back the long dark hair, which before hung over his face, he gazed at the priest in a strange exulting manner, while he said, in a loud ringing voice, that all present might hear—

"If you doubt the evidence of your sight, Father Maguire, let me assist its deficiencies by proclaiming to you, that I am Pierce O'Neile, Colonel in the service of His Spanish Majesty, Charles IV.; and son to the late Mrs. Agnes O'Neile, whose confessor and counsellor I believe you were." As he spoke the last sentence he bent upon the priest a full penetrating glance.

"And further, you well know that my cousin Catherine and I have been destined for each other since

childhood. The rumour reached me of her intention of taking the veil, because she believed that I had ceased to exist. Overwhelmed with horror and consternation, I obtained, through great favour, leave of absence for some months, and hastened with all speed to arrive here, and if possible prevent the immolation which was all but consummated. Thank Heaven, I have not come too late! Now, Sir priest, I suppose I have your permission to leave this place? And you, love"—he stooped over the kneeling figure of Catherine—"have no fears, make no reproaches to yourself, only be true to me till to-morrow, and all will be well. Look up, dearest, and see what your love, your devotion has made of me," and he pointed to the glittering orders that sparkled on his breast. "Oh, Catherine, the joy of feeling worthy of you! and to-morrow I shall claim you openly, my own true love, and cousin!"

Gently raising the upturned face, which was now beaming upon him with unutterable tenderness and confidence, he gazed upon it with deep emotion. He turned quickly from her, and passed out under the heavy archway, for the gate had been opened to allow him to do so.

As Father Maguire listened to the young O'Neile, a strange unhappy expression came over his face, and he endeavoured to speak to him, but the words would not pass his lips; he could only make a sign to the porter to open the gate.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allowed,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more dear,
Perhaps because 'twas fallen; her sires were proud
Of deeds and days when they had fill'd the ear
Of nations, and had never bent or bow'd
To novel power; and as she was the last,
She held their old faith and old feelings fast."

BYRON.

THE Superior, who had now come upon the scene, was filled with horror and amazement, and ordered the unconscious Catherine to be carried into her private apartment. They were followed there by Father Maguire, who, with the exception of one of the lay-sisters, whom the Abbess detained for the purpose of rendering assistance to Catherine, were the sole occupants of the room, which was elegantly, if not luxuriously fitted up. The walls were hung with richly-wrought tapestry, representing the Passion of our Lord, and at one end of the apartment was a raised alcove, within which was placed a beautiful marble statue of the Virgin; before it three long wax-lights, placed in alabaster candlesticks, burned night and day, and round the base of this figure was arranged a high crimson velvet hassock, upon which lay a breviary and rosary of ebony, inlaid with silver, that had evidently been hastily thrown down by the Abbess, when she was summoned to the scene we have just described. The greater part of the room remained in shadow; but a little transparent lamp, that the Superior had brought from the adjoining room, where she slept, threw a circle of light upon the spot where its rays fell.

Catherine was placed upon the sofa, still apparently insensible. The lay-sister bent over her, as she began disentangling the hair from the now crushed wreath;

the Abbess and Father Maguire were standing a little apart, and conversing in the Spanish tongue; a precaution which they no doubt thought necessary, considering that they were not alone. However, for our readers, there are no secrets. It was the Abbess who first spoke—

"I tell you, Redmond, that you have been too precipitate—too rash, with the young O'Neile! After all the trouble that we have taken to convince her of his death—you, as her confessor, and I, as her friend—who would have thought of his appearing at the last moment, when we believed him far away! And then to think of the scandal attendant upon the whole affair, and after the *exposé* of to-night! What is to be done now? How, in her present state, prevail upon her, or, if necessary, compel her, to complete the ceremony, which will deprive her of free agency for ever? By to-morrow's dawn the whole country may be up in arms against us, when they learn the truth, as they will, from that daring, reckless Pierce. You know, despite the odium which was cast upon his name some years ago, that the people swear by him, and adore the very ground he treads upon. And you, Redmond, although all powerful with the old man, possess, I believe, little or no influence over the son; and yet his mother, Agnes O'Neile, and I were girls together, and, as great friends, trusted you in all things."

"Ah, Josephine, would that I had never sought to influence or control her actions! It is all coming home to me now; and yet you—you alone know how I adored, how I worshipped her! yet dared not disclose it to her—a priest—a mentor, should have no heart!"

He spoke bitterly, as he folded his arms tightly together in a resolute, defiant manner—"We, to whom many an honest, ignorant heart looks up with veneration and trust, alas! that we should have the same instincts which the meanest and most abject of our fellow-creatures possess! We priests are supposed to accept

with our vows of celibacy, an abnegation of the purest and holiest ties of earth; as if the mere mouthing of a form, that at the time we believed and trusted, could help us to cast off the feelings and the laws of nature; madness! 'tis utter madness! All that softens and ennobles the heart of man, must not exist for such as ourselves; we must have no thoughts, no aspirations of life's common blessings; no glad, loved voice to welcome our return, no child's caress to remind us that we were once children. But let me not think of it, now that I have conquered. Yet, what a struggle has been mine!"

He ceased speaking for a moment, while his countenance assumed its habitual expression, and his voice had now more of tenderness in it—"The agony I suffered when she became another's—when I hoped she might have become the bride of Heaven! In her holy retreat, I might at least have worshipped afar as a mortal, the saint I had looked up to with the purest love! But it was not to be!"

The Superior, with the slightest degree of irony in her tone, said—

"At least you were determined that in her choice of a husband, she should have one that was not remarkable for his powers of penetration or uxoriousness,—at all events, in the first years of his married life. How you afterwards gained such an ascendency over both his will and mind, I confess I am at a loss to imagine," and she looked at him enquiringly as she spoke. "Yet it seems that you were not content with your power over the uncle, but went so far as to extend it to his interesting niece. What a remarkable resemblance she bears to the lost Agnes! I suppose you are aware of that? Look at this!" As she spoke, she went over to a little cabinet, and took from it a miniature painted upon ivory, and holding it beneath the lamp, they both bent over it. The priest sighed, and passed his hand across his face; then, turning instinctively to the

sofa, where the white form was reclining, and looking at the pale, unconscious face of the young girl, he said—

"True, Josephine, the likeness is great, yet you must allow that Catherine is but a shadow of what Agnes O'Neile was in her glowing beauty!"

"Yet, Redmond, what she wants in beauty has been repaid to her in intellect. That girl, if her mind had been properly developed and cared for, and not left to the caprices of a teacher who could only bestow upon her a superficial knowledge, would have been a superior being; as it is—thanks to your assiduous endeavours to continue her education on a more solid basis—she possesses greater learning than many women of her age can boast of, and is endowed with a courage and will capable of sustaining her through all adversities. Ah! she is recovering; perhaps you had better withdraw, as your presence at first may bring back too vividly to her mind the dreadful scene which she has just gone through. Besides, she will never forgive your interference with her lover.

"How handsome he looked! I dread to think of the consequences should she ever know the part we have played in keeping back his letters. We have only one consolation—that of knowing it was for a good cause. Catherine at times often struck me as wavering in her faith; but when the false news of his death came, a change passed over her, which I knew how to turn to advantage. The first thing to be done was to put an end to her intimacy with that heretic, Margaret Maitland, who, it appears, had a little influence over her. Now, if she could be made to accept the vow before to-morrow, there would be nothing to apprehend. I must try all my powers of persuasion; but what can eloquence do against love—eh, Redmond?"

As she said this, she gave him a side-long glance. Suddenly a bright idea seemed to strike her; she remained some moments in deep thought, with her hand

pressed to her brow, before giving it utterance; then looking at Father Maguire, she said—

"Supposing I can make her believe that the events of the last half-hour have been all a dream! I see no reason to contradict it; I can easily find some pretence for her being here in this state. In any case I must venture it, otherwise I doubt our ingenuity in making her listen to reason, particularly when she finds out how we have deceived her. 'The end justifies the means.' I'll do it!"

The priest looked wonderingly at her, and said—"Josephine, it's a pity you were not born a man, instead of a woman, for your powers of diplomacy might have made a cardinal of you, instead of a simple Abbess. Do with her as you will, only be quick about it. Poor child, I would it could be otherwise, but it is too late! And this young man, although Agnes' son, once defied me, and even went so far as accusations: his mother foolishly confided everything to him." And with a glance towards the sofa, in which pity struggled with a deeper feeling, he withdrew, with the expressed intention of confiding all that had taken place to the Bishop.

His cousin, Josephine Ursula Magdalena St. Clair, Lady Abbess of the convent, seeing the curtain close upon Father Maguire, made a sign to the sister to follow him. When she had quitted the apartment, the Abbess walked slowly and meditatively towards the alcove, and bending before the beautiful statue, she took up the rosary, and began telling her beads. She had been thus employed for ten minutes, and had nearly passed over half of them, when an almost imperceptible moan fell upon her ear; she rose from her kneeling posture, and, advancing to the sofa, placed a chair near to it, and waited for Catherine to awake from the lethargy which had succeeded her faintness. After a little time her eyes unclosed, and fixed their gaze upon the Abbess with such a peculiar

expression that she, who had never been known to give way to any weakness of feeling, started, and moved uneasily in her chair, as she almost in a whisper uttered—

"Sister Ursula (the name given to Catherine during her noviciate), what is it, my child? Speak! have you been dreaming anything to alarm you? Do you know that you fainted in the chapel after we had left, and that I was summoned to your assistance, and ordered you to be brought here? But the dream, child; if you could remember, and tell it to me, it would relieve you. Don't look at me in that strange manner, but speak—anything rather than this silence."

Catherine, still speechless, sat up and stared about her; then, with an impulsive movement, stood erect, like an accusing spirit before its evil genius, with the veil falling on her shoulders, and her hair floating loosely around her. She slowly raised her hand, and pointed in the direction of the alcove; but yet she spoke not. The Abbess now stood up, curious to know what this pantomime upon the girl's part meant. She was a majestic-looking woman, who, evidently in her youth, must have been handsome, for she still retained no slight share of beauty, although now verging upon fifty. These two women gazed intently at each other—the one in the bloom of her young life and attractions, the other in the decline of both. At last Catherine spoke, with her usual clear, careless tone, but with a husky, rapid voice—

"Swear to me, before the blessed Virgin, whom we both worship and adore, that the past hour in my life has been a fearful dream, from which I have but now awakened, and I will—yes, I will believe you speak truly, if there be any truth in man or——"

The last sentence she cried out aloud, then waited breathlessly and anxiously, seeming almost frightened at what the Abbess might do; as if some dreadful issue, known only to herself, depended upon it.

The Superior must have been a good actress, for instead of answering, she slowly drew a white pocket-handkerchief from the reticule hanging by her side, which she raised to her face, and held it there with both hands for some minutes; then, withdrawing it, she disclosed to Catherine's anxious gaze a countenance in which the expression of two feelings were striving for mastery,—amazement and sorrow. She went up to the novice, and putting out her arms, seemed as if she would embrace her; but Catherine stepped back quickly from her.

"Oh, my child! my dear child! what has come to you so suddenly—so violently? What mean those frightened eyes—that trembling form? Can the dream have been so dreadful? I see it all now; the long vigils and fasting of the last few weeks have been too much for you, they have helped for the moment to weaken your reason; besides, the ceremony of to-night has been too great an effort. I might have foreseen all this, had I given it sufficient consideration." She sighed deeply as she concluded the sentence,—whether at the task she had undertaken, or at her own deceit, is doubtful.

"However, the repose of an hour or two will restore you again. You shall remain here with me, till the supreme moment arrives for your vow to be completed. Come and sit down by me;" and she once more endeavoured to take her by the hand, but Catherine resisted her.

"I shall not sit down, Madam, till you have complied with my petition;" and she again pointed to the alcove.

The Abbess, as if talking aloud to herself, began to walk rapidly up and down the apartment; each time as she neared the clock, looking at it in a more nervous manner.

"Poor girl! I have often heard of such attacks, when, by humouring the caprice of the moment, one has been known to bring the sufferer to reason again. Were

it anything else, I could do it; but what she asks! No, I cannot—cannot trifle with sacred things. No, Sister Ursula, ask anything else in my power to grant."

She went over to her as she finished speaking. At that moment the tapestry was partly drawn back, and the lay-sister appeared in the opening; she made a deep reverence to the Superior, and informed her that her presence was required outside. The Abbess, making a sign to the sister that she would follow her immediately, turned to look at Catherine, so as to assure herself that no harm could happen in leaving her alone for a few moments. The arras had no sooner closed upon her, than Catherine ran over to the high window, and drawing back the heavy curtains, looked out to see if there was any visible sign of the coming day; but without, all was black and obscure. She then hurried towards the time-piece, and saw that the hands were upon the stroke of three. Was it possible that so many hours had gone by, since she had been carried from the chapel? In two hours it would be daylight. Would he return in time, and with power to save her? was the question that she now put to herself.

Yes, she would trust in him, and decided that nothing should now compel her to pronounce the fatal words, that would shut her out for ever from his love. He wanted her, she felt that her presence was necessary to his welfare; then she remembered with indignation, how cruelly, unjustly, wickedly she had been deceived by those her Church told her to believe. Her eyes were now opened, and all doubts and waverings were at an end. We need not inform the reader, that she had overheard the whole of the conversation, which had taken place between the Superior and Father Maguire, for she was conversant with the Spanish language.

The Superior came back after some little delay, rather agitated in manner. Strange to say, she took little or no heed of Catherine's presence, but went into the inner apartment; and, while there, Catherine could

hear her as if apostrophising some one, or talking to herself. She returned to Catherine, and glanced anxiously towards the clock. Then, as if recollecting something, she walked over to Catherine, and asked her if she was willing to accompany her to the chapel, where all was in readiness for the completion of the ceremony begun last night; adding, that it was absolutely necessary for it to be performed somewhat earlier than intended, on account of the Bishop having been solicited to attend a meeting, which was to take place that day at a certain hour. Catherine felt that the hand of the Abbess trembled excessively as it touched hers, and she answered—

"No, Madam, unless you fulfil the conditions that I mentioned to you."

"Why, child, what caprice is this? and what has come to you? Are you not aware that one must not trifle with sacred things?"

"Madam, it is not trifling. It will only prove how you honour her whom you swear by; it is but part of your integrity which you uphold by so doing, for the holier the object, the purer and more sanctified the oath."

The Superior seemed to act more under the influence of some other person, than from her own will. She cast a look of anguish and fear upon Catherine, which the latter never forgot. For a moment Catherine almost repented proceeding so far; yet she conquered the feeling, for she had a great stake at heart, which the next few moments must decide.

The weather, which in the early part of the previous evening, and late that night, had been sultry, had changed; the rain was now pouring down with unabated fury, and every now and then there was a violent clap of thunder, that shook the window-frames, causing them to vibrate, as if that were a moment of which Heaven itself disapproved.

The Superior walked slowly over to the alcove, and

knelt on the cushion; she did not raise her eyes to the figure above her, but kept them bent down. Catherine had followed closely behind her, without being perceived, and now attentively watched her slightest movement. She saw the upraised hands clasp themselves together, and the lips begin to move; yet no sound came from them. Noting all this, she waited no longer, but, with a rapid sweep of her hand, separated those of the Abbess, and in solemn tones exclaimed—

"Forbear, Madam, to add perjury to deceit and untruth! I know all; I heard the conversation that passed between you and Father Maguire. For my own peace of mind hereafter, I wished to see how far the Roman Church permitted its votarists to proceed, without calling down its anathemas upon them."

Then, in accents of wild despair, she continued—"Oh, that I had—that I could still be deceived in what once was so high, so pure, so holy to me! Broken faith is a terrible thing, when that faith has been in childhood, and in youth, your adoration and trust—the light and truth of your people and your country! How believe in a new worship, when so cruelly deceived in the old! Another belief can never be to me what my past has been,—never! Oh, Madam, speak no more to me of the duties, the pleasures of such! I forgive you, as I trust Heaven will, the part you have acted towards me. And now I beg that you will allow me at once to leave this convent, where you, in your mistaken zeal, have been profaning all that should have been most sacred.

"I have sinned through ignorance, and you, I believe, in blinded error. Let me return to the world, which has now human ties and duties for me to perform. What has passed between us this night, shall remain unknown to all but ourselves and Father Maguire, whom I believed to be above the weaknesses of every-day mortals; but he, too, has deceived me!"

She burst into tears, overwhelmed with the enormity of the injustice practised upon her by those whom she

esteemed and looked up to. Still more dreadful was it to her, to have her religion stripped of truth and exaltedness—made a broken empty sound. She wept long and bitterly, taking no heed of the woman who had so debased herself in her opinion. The Superior now learning, through Catherine's knowledge of the past, that all was lost, arose from the seat, upon which she had thrown herself after Catherine's denunciation, once more the dignified Lady Abbess. She had been spared a fearful sin, at least in her eyes, although her kinsman, the priest, had assured her that it would be forgiven, for the sake of the good work which it was to forward.

Daring and false as she was, she had shrank back appalled at the perjury she was told she must commit for the sake of an immortal soul; we have seen how she avoided, till the last moment, performing it. Catherine had saved her from this by her avowal, and she was grateful that it was so, even though the much-coveted prize would now slip through their hands. Catherine was not portionless; since her entrance into the convent she had become of age, and upon that very day had signed a paper to the effect that—her novitiate over, and she a professed nun—part of her fortune, such as it was, should fall into the revenues of the order to which she belonged.

The Superior, after allowing Catherine to indulge unrestrainedly in her grief, came over to her, and taking the now unresisting hand in hers, pressed it with more of real warmth than she had ever done before. Strange to say, this haughty Abbess was moved by the grief of the young girl before her,—a grief of which she partly was the cause; but, more than all, was she touched by her generous, her impulsive forgiveness of the misery which she had through her suffered. She remembered, too, her own youth, that she had also loved and suffered, and had been sacrificed to a vocation which only

long years of patience and endurance brought her at last to tolerate and accept; but in doing so, it had changed and warped the once free and unprejudiced nature, till she only saw one road to heaven, to which everything else must be sacrificed.

She now promised to help Catherine, but it would be necessary that she should quietly remain for a few days within the convent walls, before returning to her friends, so as not to scandalise the community. Everything should be carried out as she wished, but slowly and calmly, as if nothing had happened, except the unlooked-for return of her cousin, whom every one believed to be dead: that would be a sufficient reason, as far as the world was concerned, for her change of mind, and renunciation of the life which she had chosen of her own free will. Catherine allowed herself to be soothed, but all had changed for her in the last few hours. At the Superior's request she was now to occupy, for the short time she would remain, a closet adjoining her own apartments, that should be fitted up for her; as it would not be consistent now,—taking the strict discipline of convent-life into consideration—for the other novices to have this apostate constantly before their eyes, recalling to them their former life and the outward world, which was now going to open again upon their young sister.

Morning came at last, but it brought no news of Pierce; and the long hours of that weary day passed on, yet he came not, nor sent to tell her, and assure her that she had not dreamed, but that he had come back to claim her before all; come back, with the follies of his youth redeemed, through her love and fidelity to him; that he could now look around upon his fellow men with an unclouded brow, and assume the old familiar place which was his on that desolate hearth, and be a comfort to the old man, who now had only one child to console him—the gentle, patient Mary; but the little suffering Otway still lived on a cripple. Catherine

had longed, and prayed, and dreamed of this return, till that day when a dreadful blow, a fearful blank, came to her hopes: the news was received that Pierce had ceased to exist, and that, before he had effaced the blot from his name.

How dreary now were the long hours to her, bereft, as she was, of all religious consolation. She went back in spirit to that day, when Miss Maitland assured her that the time would come, when she too would long and seek for help from the same source as herself. That time had already come, yet she dared not seek for comfort.

Towards evening she stole out into one of the long passages, and, lost in thought, went on further than she intended; when her attention was riveted by the sound of the chapel organ, and the voices of the novices singing the "Angelus." She stopped and listened—for what? For the soothing influence it had upon her? or for the hopes it brought to her of heaven? Oh, no! never again could she find peace or comfort from such things. She ran from the spot, frightened at her own thoughts, and tried to think of other things—if possible, to become indifferent and even reckless to all around her.

For the first time in her life, she laid down that night without a prayer on her lips or in her heart. Yet, so strong was the force of habit, that before she was aware of it, she found herself upon her knees in the attitude of devotion, but, starting up with self-consciousness, she only felt her misery the greater. Then the idea presented itself to her, should she die that night, and awaken in eternity a disbeliever, an apostate, what mercy would there be for her? Hour after hour, as she lay awake, tossing and striving to think of indifferent things, a terrible fear oppressed her, which at last made her cry out to One to have pity on her. After awhile, exhausted and worn out, she fell asleep.

The next day passed the same as the foregoing one,

and still no tidings of Pierce O'Neile. It was very strange; she would give him another day, and then, if she saw or heard nothing of him, she must determine what course to pursue, for to remain in the convent in her negative position would be impossible.

Upon the evening of the third day, Catherine was seated at an open window, looking out into the garden. The sun was setting, lighting up all that it fell upon with a warmth and glow that for the moment made Catherine put down the work she was mechanically performing, to gaze upon it. The sun slowly began to decline, till it reached the summit of the high wall, where it glowed and played for some minutes, then disappeared beyond, and was lost to her longing eyes. How she, too, in her present flow of thoughts, wished to have disappeared with it, clasped in its warm embrace, there to remain hidden beneath it for ever! Now, as her look fell back once more upon the sombre garden—rendered doubly so, because of the brilliant, glorious orb that a short time before was flooding it with golden light—it seemed to her a reflection of her own mind, for the light which had once warmed and illuminated it with hope and serenity, had now departed, leaving it dark and cold.

The work dropped unnoticed from her lap to the floor, and twilight came on; still she remained motionless. Then the stars came slowly out, and twinkled in the blue vault above her, while the glittering evening star, the star of the West—brighter in that isle than elsewhere—rose up before her, cheering her with its hope-inspiring presence. A tear fell upon her folded hands, as the star seemed to look down and smile, and come between her and the dark thoughts within.

All through her young life she had looked upon that star with a feeling of calm trust, and a presentiment of good, which she hoped might come in the future. It had been, indeed, her guiding star, in whose appearance her highly enthusiastic and impressionable nature at-

tributed something more than ordinary individuals might. To most people it would be no more than any other luminary; but to the Irish girl, born and fostered in the very lap of romance and imagery, it was hope and peace, and something more than either,—that indescribable feeling, which if conveyed into prosaic words, would only appear to many, an exaggerated and exalted fancy.

Her gaze fixed itself upon it; but what passed through her heart is not permitted us this time to tell. Suffice to say, that the eyelids at last drooped over the weary eyes, and the hands unclasped themselves, and fell inertly by her side. Twenty minutes might have elapsed, when, suddenly, hurried footsteps were heard, —an exclamation of joy was uttered,—and Catherine was awakened by the pressure of an arm encircling her. She started up, as if speaking aloud in her sleep, saying—

"Uncle! oh let me still dream on!"

CHAPTER XXV.

"*Lang syne!*—how doth the word come back,
With magic meaning to the heart,
As memory roams the sunny track
From which hope's dreams were loath to part!
No joy like by-past joy appears;
For what is gone we fret and pine.
Were life spun out a thousand years,
It could not match *Lang syne!*"

MOIR.

WE must now return to Pierce O'Neile, whom we left in the act of quitting the convent. As its gates closed upon him, he stopped to consider in what direction he should go, or what he should do. Indeed, his ideas

were so unsettled and confused by the events of the last few hours, that he could not collect his thoughts, or decide upon what was best to be done. One determination was uppermost in his mind—that was to prevent, at all hazards, Catherine's taking the veil; and he knew that he could, to a certain extent, rely upon her strong will not to be forced or frightened into anything contrary to her inclinations. He had neither seen nor communicated with his family since his return, nor indeed with any one who had known him in former days.

Now, the O'Neile, although the old love for Catherine still remained in his heart, did not, or would not, approve of her resolution in burying herself within the walls of a convent. They had not seen each other since that fatal day, nearly three years back; but he often wrote and sent kind messages to her, yet never once asked her to come back to him. That, more than anything else, together with Edward Maitland's unexpected declaration of love, drove her to seek refuge in the convent. There she hoped to find peace, without any definite thought of becoming a nun, for she still looked forward to her cousin's return, from whom she for the first year regularly received letters. Whilst an inmate there, she came into possession of some property inherited from her mother. A short time after this event, the dreadful tidings were brought to her of the death of her cousin Pierce; and from that time she shut her heart upon the world and all it contained.

But to return to Pierce. He commenced to walk about, reflecting as to whom he should apply for advice and assistance, or whether it would not be better to go directly to his father, and lay the whole truth before him. It was a day's journey from T—— to O'Neile Court, and where he even to go there at once, he could not be back again until the day after the morrow.

As he was thus debating, he chanced to run against

a man, before either was aware of the other's presence. The peasant—for such his dress, as seen by the light of the lamp near which they happened to stop, denoted him to be—spoke first, as he suddenly stepped back a few steps.

"Och, by the powers! an' shure I axes yer honor's pardon intirely! Faith it's meself was wandering like, for its unbeknown I am in the place, yesterday being the first time I iver set me two born eyes on the ground—bless the mark! An' shure that same is bekase of the pur crater of a wife at home, who must stay wid the children, or shure it's to the fore sh'd be any hour." Then all at once seeming to recollect his volubility before a stranger, he said—

"Shure, an' I'm talking to yer honor afther a manner that might laid ye to imagine I was a street-pracher, an' that too before I've towld ye me name, which is Paddy Maher, at yer service, an' that I've come all the way from O'Neile Court to be a proxy for the wife, to be present at the sight that took place this blessed night. I'll be bound yer honor was also present. Shure it was enough to take the sight out of a man's eyes, aye, an' the heart out of his body, to look on an' see them make a saint of the purty young lady; an' faix it's hard to believe that same, for it's too much heart she has in her, to try an' put nothing but sowl in it's place. Shure it would be time enough for that same when she, and the likes of her, will be beyont the clouds. We all know one can't be in two places at onst, although there are sich things as allibis."

All at once Paddy came to a dead stop, and trembled violently, while he crossed himself repeatedly, as he exclaimed, not in his former rollicking tone, but in a hoarse and suppressed voice—

"The Lord be between uz an' all harm! but it's the spurrit of the young masther—may the heavens be his bed this night! Shure, an' I'll spake to the pur crater anyhow, although one might blow me away like a

feather;" and suiting the action to the word, at the same time crossing himself in every available direction, he began—

"Masther Pierce, Sir! Would it be afther plazing yer honor to——"

He stopped short, as if at a loss to proceed, and began making the sign of the cross, as if the so doing were an equivalent for the eloquence that failed him. At last he found courage to proceed.

"Faix, an' I'm forgetting that's a spurrit I have to talk to. That I should have been borned for such an honour; for I suppose it is one, although meself can't say that it's an agreeable one. Shure, an' it won't spake, an' more's the pity! I must address it in a different way, for I've heard tell that there's no manners where they come from."

He now began to scratch his head in his dilemma, as he said—

"Bedad, an' if I only knew how to palaver him, and what title I ought to give him! Murther, intirely! Shure if I had iver dhramed of coming across a spurrit, it's afther axing his Riverence I would have been as to how I should conduct meself towards it. Begorra, I'm at a nonplush! How quiet it seems! I declare to the powers, if it's not laughing at me! Faix, if that same don't bate all I've iver seen—a big fellow, the likes of me, to have a bag of bones standing there, and grinning at me! I'll show it that two can play at that game!"

And Paddy laughed outright, but in a forced manner, that ended in a sort of gasp, which sounded anything but jolly.

Now, Pierce O'Neile, as Paddy began to address him, had taken off his cap, and during the soliloquy that followed, felt so amused, that he let him continue without interruption, till human nature could hold out no longer. At last, at this crisis of Paddy's speech, he cried out, in the old familiar voice—

"Why, Patsey, do you want to make a ghost of me

before my time? Give me your hand, man, and assure yourself that I am real flesh and blood. Eh?—are you convinced, you spalpeen? Faith, I cannot forgive your mistake. Take me for a ghost, indeed! you hard-hearted fellow; and to think of your wasting all that 'palaver,' as you would call it, upon sense and feeling."

"Och, Masther Pierce! Shure an' it's a miracle, Sir, that I should live to see this blessed night!"

The poor fellow hid his face in his hands before he could find voice to speak again; and Pierce, observing the action, without further hesitation, and yielding to the impulse within him, threw his arms round him with almost boyish fervour, forgetting all his troubles in this unlooked-for meeting with the husband of Catherine's foster-mother, Paddy Maher, who had known him as a little boy, and who had often tried to persuade him from getting into mischief, and when he, despite of all his warnings, ventured in, saving him, even at the risk of his own life; and who, as he grew older, became acquainted with all his youthful follies.

Pierce did not speak for some moments, but held him fast, while the rough peasant cried like a child in the embrace of him he so much loved and honoured, and for whom he would have died without a pang or without a regret.

In the present day, where indifference is looked upon as good breeding, and an impassibility to all casualties appreciated as a degree of stoicism, one may perhaps even question the probability of such an ebullition of feeling, displayed on the one side by a young soldier fresh from active service, and on the other by a rough, ignorant countryman, who would have thought nothing (were his patriotic principles excited) of shooting a man, and afterwards, if the case required, triumphantly giving himself up to justice, to be the hero of an untold multitude of admirers, who would come and see him die, as the Romans did the gladiators of old. But the reader will be pleased to bear in mind, that the period

of which we write was sixty years ago—the country, Ireland—and the parties concerned, patriotic Irishmen to the very heart's core.

The love of country is predominant in almost every right-thinking, independent mind, no matter what may be her political position. A man, to respect himself, must also respect the nation to which he belongs. An Irishman would devote to her all the powers of his reason, exult when she exults, glory in her glory, sympathise in her woes, and burn with indignation at her wrongs and oppression. She is his first love, to whom he turns in adversity; and in the days of her prosperity and brilliance, joys in the light of her smiles, as he goes forth to battle with the impress of her glory encircling him.

In no breast is patriotic enthusiasm so innate, almost fanatical, as in that of an Irishman. In fact, it is often carried to such excess that it sometimes leads him beyond the bounds of reason, till it becomes almost a madness, which, unhappily, but too frequently, spreads itself amongst the masses. This feeling is universal, although more demonstrative in the majority, which is the working class, than in the higher circles.

In Ireland, between the higher classes and peasantry there exists an harmony in common, which is almost affectionate in its way. On the one side, it shows itself by a warm sympathy and participation in all their little joys and sorrows; and, on the other, by a pride in them, and a reverence and an abnegation, which no circumstances can change.

Pierce was the first to break the silence; and disengaging himself, he drew back a few steps, saying—"And you did not know me, Patrick?" This was uttered in an assumed tone of reproach; yet it had its effect upon Paddy.

"Indeed, an' yer honor has the best of it, to my shame be it said; but yer honor will look over it, and not be hard on me, for the sake of the young lady, who

at the time was taking up all me thoughts—sorra blame to them same! Yer honor, Sir, me mind has been in a firment about Misch Catherine, who is now a mortal saint beyont"—and he pointed towards the convent—"though, when all's said and done, she might have kept to uz pur sinners a little longer. Shure, it's doing widout her we can't at all, at all. It's the likes of her that a body wants to have near him in this wurld; an' shure where she's gone to she has only to think of herself; but here she had others to care and worrit about. Begorra, an' it's the sthrange wurld, Masther Pierce, Sir, where ivery living sowl sames to act contrary-like. Those as ought to stay in it, an' were made to stay in it, won't; and those that are not wantin' in it, do that same. But I must not be afther showing my miscontent in the matther, or, bedad, it's a stroke I might be having to punish me for my blasphemy—the heavens between uz an' all harm! An' shure yer honor has seen her, an' can't help her, perhaps?"

"Yes, Patrick; I have come to save her!" He related all that had taken place in the convent; and as they walked up and down, within the shadow of those grim walls, which shut out from one of them all that he most prized in the world, they talked over many things of what had happened at home and abroad. At last, it was decided that Pierce should at once set out for O'Neile Court, see his father, and beg his assistance in favour of Catherine.

The mail-coach would start at five that morning, and the evening would see him at the Court: the following day he could be back again to claim her. It was further arranged that Paddy should keep guard over the convent, and by some means or other, find out if anything unusual was taking place there.

A few hours later, Pierce was seated upon the outside of the coach, and pondering in his own mind how he should meet his father after six long years of banish-

ment. How forcibly that day came back to his memory—the day in which he left the paternal roof, with a weight of woe upon his heart, and a defiant recklessness as to what the future might have in store for him.

As he neared the little town of M——, he recognised many a familiar spot, and they seemed to whisper to him of bygone days—the days of childhood, pure and free—that could never come back again, unless in dreams, which sometimes reflect the shadows of the past, and recur to us with such startling reality, as if the scenes and beings which they brought back still existed for us.

The coach now drove up the high street of M——, pursued as usual by a train of street urchins, who surrounded it, screaming at the top of their voices, and clinging behind, alike reckless of the coachman's whip, and the dogs that were barking and snapping at them.

How vividly Pierce remembered each well-known corner and shop. There was Phelan's, the grocer's, where, as a boy, he had often accompanied his father when going to give an order or to pay a bill, and where, in honour of the occasion, one of the young men in the shop was designated and known ever after as the "civil boy," on account of the manifold little parcels of raisins, figs, and sugar-candy, which he would surreptitiously or otherwise lavish on young O'Neile.

As the coach now passed by this memorable mart of sweet things, Pierce observed a man, still young, though no longer a lad, standing before the shop-door, with his dark-blue apron swathing his body, and his hands behind his back, as the "civil boy" of happy memory was accustomed to do. It might have been he, but there was no recognition in his face, as he looked up to reconnoitre the different passengers as the coach rattled on; and when his glance fell upon Pierce, the latter felt that he had passed out of his memory.

The coach was now approaching an old-fashioned private house, with a flight of stone steps leading up to the hall-door. It was the doctor's, where Pierce, as a lad, had spent many a merry evening, and the pretty grown-up daughters had exerted their Terpsichorean abilities to initiate him into some new step. One never-to-be-forgotten evening that he spent there, before an assembly of admiring country cousins and town misses, he, Master Pierce, as he was respectfully called, was prevailed upon to dance a sailor's hornpipe, till, fairly exhausted by his efforts in this grand display, he was stopped and held fast by all the young girls before he would give up. And then, after supper, one of the daughters of the house accompanied him upon the piano, whilst he sung a comic song with, at least, twenty verses, and broke down at last for want of breath. He remembered all this as if it had occurred only yesterday, as he looked up at each well-known window, from which, in the old time, there was always a kindly-beaming face looking out to welcome him. Now, they were deserted and silent, although the doctor still lived there. But the bright beings, who gave life and pleasure to the scene, where were they all? Pierce felt that the place knew them no more. No more! What sadness is in that sound! what despair, what depth of misery! It is the knell of all that has been claimed from our past lives—of all that is earthly—and of all that ever has been and ever will be, till it shall have passed out of this world, to be succeeded by that glorious "for ever," which we are told, and believe, will come hereafter!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"'You must be gone,' said Death, 'these walks are mine.'
Love wept, and spread his sheeny wings for flight;
Yet, ere he parted, said, 'This hour is thine:
Thou art the shadow of life, and as the tree
Stands in the sun and shadows all beneath,
So, in the light of great eternity,
Life eminent creates the shade of death;
The shadow passeth when the tree shall fall,
But I shall reign for ever over all.'"

TENNYSON.

TWILIGHT was settling into night as Pierce emerged from the inn-yard (where the coach usually put up) in search of a conveyance to take him to O'Neile Court, which was some miles distant from M——. He had no slight difficulty in making his way through the throng of beggars that assailed him upon all sides, and that are even to this day one of the amusements as well as plagues of Ireland. Not wishing to be recognised by their sharp eyes, should there be any among them who remembered him, he drew his cloak tightly about him, so as to hide his uniform, and pulled his hat over his eyes, then took from his pocket a handful of coppers, and threw them amongst them. This act so won upon the tatterdemalions, that they fairly barred his egress from the spot. One old woman fell upon her knees before him, and, with uplifted arms, began making the sign of the cross, exclaiming, as she did so—

"Och, yer lordship, may every blessed cross which comes from me pur sinful fingers be a ladder to take ye up to glory; shure an' it's too holy ye are fur this durty wurld. May ye niver lose the use of yer two feet, nor may the light niver lave yer two purty eyes! An' beyont all, may the lady who loves ye (fur one can see wid half an eye that ye were made fur that same) niver be false or black-hearted to ye, but howld ye fast as the apple of her eye."

Another now pushed forward, and began—"Shure yer honor, Sir, may the blessing of a pur widdy be upon yer illigant head, an' the luck of this wurld; an' shure, by that same token, they say it's better any day to be born to good luck than wid a silver spoon in yer mouth—not that I mane to say that yer lordship hadn't lashions of them same the day ye weer borned."

Luckily for Pierce, at this moment a sturdy, respectable-looking woman, with rather weak, bloodshot eyes, and a fellow passenger, came forward on their way out. She negatived, in rather a sharp manner, the demands made upon her by the persecuting beggars. Finally, perceiving that any further appeals to her benevolence would be in vain, one of them approached her with an air of mock humility and deference, but a roguish, impudent twinkle in her eye, and with innumerable bobs and bends, drawled out—"Shure then, lovely lady wid the scarlet eyes, ye wouldn't be afther going widout laving uz a remembrance of yer purty self? Faix, an' we might not see the likes of ye again in many a long day." An old crone interrupted—"Biddy, allanna, shure an' may be the sweet lady looks to uz for the charity; fur it's as good as any peep-show to look at her scarlet eyes; sind round the hat fur her."

The subject of this abuse, enraged beyond measure, was glad to make her exit the best way she possibly could, followed by the gibes of the whole tribe.

By a final effort Pierce succeeded in steering his way through them, and soon found a car to take him to O'Neile Court without delay.

As he drew up and alighted at the hall-door, Phil, who happened to be in the hall, stared at him as if he had been a ghost. Having, at once, ascertained from him where his father was to be found, he, without stopping to answer any of the numerous questions addressed to him by the old servant, rushed into the presence of the O'Neile, who was seated beside the couch

of his youngest son. The latter had but little changed during the past three years. The face still retained the soft outlines of childhood, yet, for all that, it was pale and sad; the large brown eyes kept wandering about the room, but every now and then rested upon the figure of the O'Neile, to whom he had become accustomed, and whom, by his loving manner, he almost seemed to recognise. More frequently his glance would wander to the portraits on the walls, and fix itself particularly upon that of his grandfather, whom Pierce was supposed so much to resemble; then he would turn from it to his father with an inquiring wistful gaze, as if he wished to ask him about it, but though his lips would move, no sound came from them. Afterwards, he would fall back with closed eyes, and beat his arms and hands upon the sofa, while the weary expression which came over the countenance would soon settle into the forgetfulness of sleep.

The doctor gave it as his opinion, that his senses came back at intervals, and that at such moments he must have recognised those who were about him. Acting upon this idea, they thought that some sudden or violent shock might bring back his speech; yet, for the present, they forbore from applying any, lest the consequences might prove fatal.

Pierce, as we have already said, rushed into the presence of his father, and threw himself at his feet, exclaiming—"Father, I have brought back the old hopes and feelings! Let the sad past be as a dream, which the realities of the future shall efface and atone for! Father, look at me! believe me!" and as he spoke, he drew aside his cloak, and pointed to his breast, bedecked with orders. "'Tis true these have all been won in a foreign land, and, for an oppressed people, but none the less for the betrayed."

Pierce spoke truly, for who has not read and heard of the iniquitous transaction of Bayonne, which filled the mouth of every patriotic Spaniard with the deepest

indignation, and for ever added one more blot upon the actions of an ambitious conqueror? Yes, Pierce had returned after one of the most glorious victories.

A solemn silence had fallen upon that passionate outburst. It was a picture worthy of an artist. Let us endeavour to portray it. Looming in one corner of that lofty, old-fashioned, and ghost-like apartment, stood the strange couch upon which, with dreamy look and countenance, reclined the statue-like figure of the boy, his hair flowing loosely about him. Beside him appeared the old man in reverend attitude, his son Pierce kneeling before him with upraised face, in which was depicted anxious expectancy; while upon his breast the glittering orders, that rose and fell with the emotion of their wearer, shone through the dimly-lighted room.

Pierce had scarcely finished speaking, when a whispered voice quite near to them broke upon their amazed ears. They both simultaneously turned to the couch where the boy lay. As he endeavoured to turn round on his side, his eyes fixed themselves on Pierce's face, and then wandered to the portrait of his grandfather, directly opposite. A smile of great sweetness was upon his lips at the moment. The father and son breathlessly watched his every movement, not daring by sound or sign to interrogate him. The smile soon passed away, and was succeeded by an expression of intense agony and doubt; he then covered his face with both hands, and kept them there some moments. When they were withdrawn, his countenance was bathed in tears, and he spoke again, in a very low voice, like one in a dream.

The doctor was immediately sent for; the O'Neile and Pierce remained, silently pressing each other's hands. The father knew that the crisis had come, and now at last, when almost all hope had been given up, the tongue, so long silent, was unlocked, and memory and reason struggled once more to resume their sway in the poor weakened brain. Nature had been the great physician, and was mysteriously and

wonderfully aroused within him at the sudden apparition of the brother whom he had scarcely known. Yet who can say, as he lay there day after day, and month after month, in the same immoveable indifference, what thoughts, confused though they must have been, prepared him for this moment!

When the doctor arrived, the boy was highly excited; while his father, Pierce, and Mary bent over him, speechless with delight at the miracle they witnessed, little dreaming at the time that it was but the forerunner of death.

The doctor administered a soporific, which he calculated would last some five or six hours. The O'Neile, and his long-lost son, watched by the child's couch far into the night, and Pierce explained Catherine's position, and his own wishes and future plans. The O'Neile listened, but offered no reply to his son's supplications. The night was now well-nigh spent, and the doctor had returned to await the awaking of the boy. While they were all sitting quietly, yet anxiously looking at him, he moved uneasily, and muttered the name of "Catherine;" the next instant he opened his eyes, and stared around him. The doctor made a sign for them all to withdraw, and he remained alone with the child.

Some time later the O'Neile was summoned, as the boy wished for him. He went in alone, and remained a long time with his little son. No one knew what passed between them, but when he came out again, a great change was visible in him. Instead of the apathy and indifference which had characterised him since the fatal accident, he was now remarkably excited; burning spots reddened either cheek, and his eyes had an eager, feverish light in them. To the innumerable questions put to him as to what Otway had been talking about, he evaded all direct answers, and surprised them by saying that he was going himself to bring back Catherine, and deputed Pierce to take

his place beside his brother till his return the following evening. There was no time to lose, if he would not miss the coach, and there was, moreover, an hour's drive before him.

He gave orders to Phil to accompany him, and to make all preparations necessary for the journey.

Every one in the house, including the doctor, were in no small astonishment at this information. They at last set it down to an express wish of the boy to see his cousin Catherine, who was looked upon as being the accidental cause of his loss of reason, and almost of his life; yet time had taught them to think better of her, and pity her for the misfortune of that one moment.

On the evening of the following day, a jaunting car drove rapidly up to the entrance of O'Neile Court. Two figures alighted; one was the O'Neile, and the other the muffled form of a lady, who, before she could advance many steps, was clasped in the arms of Pierce. Need we assure our readers, that it was our heroine Catherine?

The meeting between her and Otway was very touching; the boy nestled his head upon her shoulder, and passing his arm round her neck, whispered gently to her—

"Catherine, I have told all to papa, and he says that every one must be made acquainted with the truth, for your sake, before I go to ——" His voice faltered a little as he continued—"I am not afraid, cousin!" He held her tighter to him, as he watched the sad look in her face—"Pierce has come back to take my place, and be to papa what I had hoped one day to be. I feel, Catherine, that mamma is waiting for me *there;* I have dreamed of her, oh, so often; and she has smiled and held out her arms to take me to her. All last night I heard such beautiful soft music floating about me, and, as it were, raising me ever higher and higher, till I passed beyond our house and the park, and blue sea, far, far away. Perhaps it will come

again to-night, and then, Catherine, I think it will bear me away for ever. I am so tired here!" A weary, wistful look settled upon the pale little face, and the eyes had the far-off expression so habitual to them

"Perhaps, now, I should have liked to remain a little longer with papa, poor papa! and have talked to him, and comforted him, by telling him what I should say to mamma for him; but now I can better leave him, for you have come back, and you and Pierce will never go from him again, Catherine. He has been so unhappy, and has often cried as he sat by my bedside, when he thought I could not understand him; but I did, although I could not tell him so. And Catherine, dear"—he drew her closer to him, and said in a low, solemn voice—"be sure you tell—tell Geraldine, that I forgive her!"

Towards morning the spirit took its flight from earth, to dwell for ever in the realms of immortality.

There was nothing to be regretted: death, to such as he was, is eternal peace and rest. It was but the transplanting of a flower from this wilderness of earth, in order that it might flourish for ever in the paradise of God—the fading out of a bright particular star to shine with renewed light in a purer world—the voice of Christ saying, "come up hither."

No, truly there was nothing to be regretted in such a death. They grieved for him, because of their mortal nature, yet not like those who cannot be comforted.

Old Phil assured them, that all that night the banshee had incessantly wailed round the old castle, and particularly before the windows of the apartment where the boy lay dying. He affirmed (and he truly believed what he stated), that, having gone out to the hall-door upon more than one occasion, he saw her white vapoury figure floating about; and his heart told him that the old race were waiting for their young kinsman to descend to his rest with them. In fact, Phil

had been on the watch for the white lady, from the moment the doctor had said the child had only some hours to live.

It would have been a sore disappointment, not to say sorrow, to the faithful old servant, if the banshee—who is only known to announce to the descendants of ancient and great families in Ireland, that one of their members is about to be called away—had omitted her mission that night.

So Phil was proud of his privilege, as he named it, of already having heard and seen the banshee for three generations; and stated that he could die easily, now that the passing away of the fourth had been proclaimed to him.

The Sunday after the funeral, the priest read from the altar of the little chapel of G—— (which was densely crowded), that part of the dying declaration of Otway O'Neile which exculpated Catherine from all blame respecting his accident and death. The name and position of the truly guilty, he said, were known to him, but for various reasons, it was not thought necessary to announce them publicly, as such a course would in no way assist the ends of justice. Indeed, as he had lived so long after the fatal accident, it could not be proved that his death ensued as the immediate effect of the accident or outrage, whichever it might have been. He, the priest, was strongly inclined to believe that it was the first.

Catherine and Pierce were married, quite privately, in the same little chapel. The period of the leave of absence of the latter had now expired, and he was obliged to return to Spain to fulfil his engagement; but this time it was not alone, for Catherine insisted upon accompanying him.

She did not change her religion, but she learned to view it in another light, and not to trust to forms alone in order to serve God. Outward form is not always an index of inward purity, but faith,

when sincere and perfect, as its name implies, no matter what its garb may be, is still in itself a virtue.

And she was happy in the consciousness that her husband and she were one in their heavenly, as they were in their earthly, aspirations; for without such unity there can be no affinity of soul. But she had a long and hard battle, before she could bring herself to think as she now did. Indeed, had not Catherine's good angel been ever by her side during the conflict, and prompted her to follow the pure, simple example of her cousin Mary, who was happy and good in her devotedness, she would perhaps have rather remained an unbeliever in all religious ceremonies, than have become an apostate to the worship of her fathers.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Yet it was not that nature had shed o'er the scene
Her purest of crystal and brightest of green,
'Twas not her soft magic of streamlet or hill,
Oh, no!—it was something more exquisite still.

'Twas that friends, the beloved of my bosom, were near,
Who made every dear scene of enchantment more dear,
And who felt how the best charms of nature improve,
When we see them reflected from looks that we love."

MOORE.

IT is a lovely, balmy evening in June—June, the poet's month, when skies are clearest and bluest, and nature's green has not yet exchanged her first brightness, for the darker foliage of more advanced summer. The glad voices of childhood and youth are heard and echoed around, while the song of birds is piercing the soft air with the burden of their happiness.

Upon such an evening, and just eight years after the events last narrated, an open travelling-carriage arrived, drawn by some score of peasantry, who were shouting and making all sorts of demonstrations to show their joy, some by throwing their hats up in the air (if the crownless things, which most of them wore, could be so designated), while others flourished no end of shillalies in every direction; and a procession of women and children kept up a never ceasing bawl of blessings and good wishes.

As the carriage approaches the house, a circle is cleared round it, disclosing an old man, with snow-white hair, and by his side a sweet womanly figure—who is no other than the gentle, devoted Mary O'Neile, in outward appearance but little changed since we last saw her. The old man was the O'Neile.

The traces of the carriage are now unfastened, and a universal and simultaneous shout rents the air of—"Long live Masther Pierce, his lady and chilthers!" "Three cheers for the O'Neile!" "Whoop! Hurrah boys!" "Cead mille falthae" The last sentence was uttered in old Irish, and taken up by a hundred voices.

With some difficulty, the occupants of the carriage now stepped out amongst the excited crowd of eager, curious faces. The first was a tall, handsome man, in the prime of manhood; the second a lady, still young, whose beaming smile now lit up with fascination a countenance, which was rather interesting than strictly beautiful. Two children were with them, a pretty, fair girl of five, and a boy of seven. But what causes the O'Neile to start forward, and impulsively seize hold of the boy's hand, while he gazes upon him with a half-doubting, half-trembling emotion? Catherine O'Neile (for she it was), as she remarks her uncle's amazement, now approaches, and taking off the child's cap, smooths back the waving dark hair from the brow, saying—"Uncle, I have brought you a second little son Otway, to replace the one who has gone from us. Is

he not the living image of what his namesake was?—indeed, one would almost think that he stood before us." This was said with great tenderness, and a little pride.

There were great rejoicings to welcome home the absentees. Bonfires were seen blazing every night within ten miles of O'Neile Court. All the farmers' wives and daughters, far and near, came to present their coubeen of eggs, as the Easter eggs are called in Ireland; never taking into consideration, that the coubeen is especially an Easter offering in that country, and never thought of at any other festival. But the O'Neiles took the will for the deed, and forgave them for not having the patience to wait till the following year: we all know that joy cannot and should not be deferred.

We are happy to say, that Catherine, after her marriage, no longer indulged in dreamy foreshadowings of events to come; she confided all to her husband, who did not, by laughing at her, try to weaken them, but by steady and judicious reasoning, sought to convince her, that they were but the overstrained fancies and conjurations of the brain, which persons of a highly-strung imagination possess more or less, and which are nourished and acted upon by locality, impressionability, and even the air they breathe. All the foreshadowing in the world cannot prevent the accidents incidental to mortality; for, if it could, mankind would become, to a certain extent, invulnerable to the ills to which all flesh is heir. Providence is very merciful in hiding from our mortal eyes all of good or bad, that the future may have in store for us, although we often impatiently and unreasonably long, and would give anything, to peep into it. What would become of us were we allowed to do so!

Pierce O'Neile, by a long life of integrity and doing good, redeemed all the deficiencies of his youth, and thereby helped to cheer, and, it might be through Provi-

dence, prolong, his father's old age. He had not fought for liberty alone during his Spanish campaign. On his return to his native land, his first act had been to cancel the agreement between the possessor of the archives and the O'Neile. How his heart bounded as he received them once more in expectation of the night (when he and his father sat beside the couch of the little boy, Otway, who was then passing away to another and a happier home), when he would deliver them into his keeping.

Some short time after their return, Catherine and her husband were alone one day, sitting conversing in the old apartment. They both simultaneously raised their eyes to the portrait of their ancestor, the one which Pierce so much resembled; they afterwards looked at each other, a strange, conscious, inquiring smile lighting up both their countenances. Pierce arose, and going over to the picture, raised the heavy frame in both hands, and disclosed beneath it a hollow recess in the wall, about a foot in diameter, and long enough to allow a human being to stand erect in it.

He turned to his companion, who had followed him, and said—"Kathleen, behold your handy-work! To think of the hours I passed up there—those long, anxious momentous hours! What did they not show and prove to me of woman's worth and courage!

"Oh, Catherine! as I looked down that night through my grandfather's portrait upon this home, and thought of the hearts to which I had brought so much sorrow, I made a solemn, deep, and sincere vow to restore all that, in leaving it and them, I had forfeited. When my father looked up at me as you stood beside him, an earnest cry arose from my heart to my lips, the suppression of which was agony to me. That moment was the extreme of suffering, and the reality of bliss,—so strangely do our joys and sorrows amal-

gamate; for to enjoy thoroughly, one must have suffered intensely; and both feelings were then uppermost with me." He took her hands in his, and looked down into the true eyes that were gazing up at him.

"That night, Pierce, was a romance in our lives, which none but ourselves understood. I laugh at it now; but I have often wondered what gave me the courage, I may say the inspiration, to accomplish it. You, with all your anxiety as to what the consequences might be, had at least some feeling of enjoyment, as you admit; whilst I had a terrible misgiving that something would betray you; particularly when Mr. Herbert became so enthusiastic in his admiration of your countenance," and she smiled archly as she concluded the sentence. "But the climax to my fears followed when Father Maguire rose with the intention of scrutinising the picture; I felt that his penetrating glance and suspicious nature would divine all, and that the worst had come; but at that auspicious moment the Black Chieftain's portrait fell with a crash to the floor; and, as you have since told me, by your contrivance."

"Yes, Kathleen dhu, when I saw the priest coming, I felt that if he looked in my face he would recognise me beyond a doubt. At the moment, I thought of drawing my own back, and letting the painted one fall, which you had so ingeniously contrived to cut out of the portrait, except about an inch at the top of the forehead, which was easily bent back when I wished to protrude my own. But there was neither time nor opportunity to act upon the thought of the instant, for my cousin Lionel at that precise moment had his eyes fixed upon me. There was nothing left but to make a bold and last effort; so, passing my left hand, which happened to be the one next to my dark ancestor, while with the other I held tight to the rivet that you had secured in the frame-work at the back of the picture for my convenience, with great difficulty, stretching

out my arm, which barely touched the frame of the Black Chieftain, I gave it a sudden jerk, when it fell, causing a general alarm, while it assured to me my preservation. In spite of the seriousness of my position, and the chances that were still attendant upon my safety, I could not help laughing at old Phil's prognostications and ludicrous reminiscences; but the romance of it was not yet over.

"Later that night, when you were all in the kitchen, in my hurry and anxiety to escape, I was forced to appear to Geraldine, disguised as a monk: you remember I assumed that dress to introduce myself into the house. I hoped to escape by the window, which your foresight left unfastened, but, to my consternation, as I was in the very act of stepping across it, the watch-dog (that had been let loose for the night) began barking furiously, and even tried to snap at me. For safety, I was obliged to put down the window; then I considered what was best to be done. There was nothing to apprehend from Geraldine, who still continued insensible. To return to my old hiding-place behind the picture was impossible, for although I had found it easy enough to slide down from it, to reach it again, without a ladder, was impossible. I crept under the old settee, and with great inconvenience contrived to hide myself. I listened to your conversation when you all returned from the kitchen, and found Geraldine in a state of unconsciousness. After you had gone up-stairs I was on the point of creeping from beneath my hiding-place, when who should enter the room but old Phil! He began to shut the shutters, drawing a heavy bar of iron across each window. This done, he retired, and I was alone once more in the now dark room, for the decaying embers had died out. I dared not unbar the shutters, for, by doing so, I might again attract the attention of the dog. I waited patiently till all seemed still in the house; then I crept out into the hall, and tried to open the door; but it was

also locked and barred-up for the night. As a last resource I resolved to find you, and with this intention crept up-stairs. Arriving at your door, which was partly open, I entered the room; all was dark; I called softly upon your name, but received no answer; I was then convinced that you were in attendance upon Geraldine. I went on noiselessly till I reached her room; I did not hesitate as to what I should do, but turned the handle of the lock as gently as possible, cautiously pushing open the door. You know what followed,—how I blessed you as you came out after me, and, following me down-stairs, with your own soft hands removed the bolt, and let me out! The dog was still outside, and began to bark at our approach, till a few words from your lips brought him to your side, and you stooped to caress him, whilst I, favoured by the obscurity of the night, soon reached the Dingle, without having encountered any one. Arrived within the cavern, I, to the general surprise and regret of my little band, announced to them my firm purpose of embarking that very night (in a little vessel, of the movements of which I was daily informed) for the coast of Spain, with the intention of gaining the interior of the country, and offering myself as a volunteer to help the Spaniards fight against their oppressors, the French, then under the command of Napoleon. I wrote a letter of explanation to the real Captain Sweeny, apprising him of my project, and of the transfer of my honours, as his representative, to the oldest and most trustworthy of the band, till he himself should think fit to return and reinstate himself in his former position."

In conclusion, we must not omit to say a few words of the other characters. Geraldine, the beautiful, but false, played her cards so well, that having got rid of Catherine, who stood somewhat in her way, she at last succeeded in monopolising the heart she had striven

so hard to gain. Lionel Herbert married her, and completed her happiness by removing her from the "savage wilds of Ireland," as she was pleased to designate her country. In her English home she soon won, by her beauty and elegance, many admirers, but no friends. For sometime after their marriage Lionel was proud and pleased with the sensation which his lovely wife created wherever she went; but, too soon for his happiness, he discovered that the rose had thorns, and could wound so deeply, that the pain inflicted could not compensate for the loveliness of the flower from which it had sprung.

Margaret Maitland and Catherine remained dear friends, yet never but once, after the marriage of the latter, was the subject of religion discussed between them. It was sufficient for each to know that the other was happy in her faith.

Edward Maitland went abroad again, where he persuaded his sister to join him. Time at last effected his cure, although in after years he never could look upon Catherine without recalling the past.

Father Maguire kept his ascendency over the O'Neile while he lived, for Catherine would not, or dared not, breathe her suspicions to her uncle about him; she felt that to do so would prove fatal both to her own and her husband's future happiness. In Ireland, for a priest to be called to account for actions committed in any way connected with or bearing upon his profession, when approved of by that profession, would be to arouse the anger and hatred of all the peasantry. So Father Maguire, to all outward appearance, remained upon the same footing with the O'Neile family till the day of his death. Whether he ever suspected all that Catherine knew about him, we cannot say; we only know that upon his dying bed he sent for her and her husband, and we trust made his peace with them, as he himself looked for peace from above.

And now our readers must say farewell to the O'Neiles,

and their triumphs and trials. Should they by any chance ever visit the wild, but beautiful Western Coast of Ireland, there are many, who to this day can point out to them the spot where stand the now mouldering ruins of what was once O'Neile Court; for neither is their name, nor are the events we have related, a fiction.

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